ENOCH CRANE

· F · HOPKINSON · SMITH ·
· & · F · BERKELEY · SMITH ·

Mary Whitney Vinton,
Memphis, Tenn.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/enochcrane0000fhop

BOOKS BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

FELIX O'DAY. Illustrated	*net*	$1.35
THE ARM-CHAIR AT THE INN. Illustrated	*net*	1.30
KENNEDY SQUARE. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
PETER. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
THE TIDES OF BARNEGAT. Illustrated . .	*net*	1.35
THE FORTUNES OF OLIVER HORN. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
THE ROMANCE OF AN OLD-FASHIONED GENTLEMAN. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
COLONEL CARTER'S CHRISTMAS. Illustrated.	*net*	1.35
FORTY MINUTES LATE. Illustrated . . .	*net*	1.35
THE WOOD FIRE IN NO. 3. Illustrated .	*net*	1.35
THE VEILED LADY. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
AT CLOSE RANGE. Illustrated	*net*	1.35
THE UNDER DOG. Illustrated	*net*	1.35

IN DICKENS'S LONDON. Illustrated . . .	*net*	2.00
OUTDOOR SKETCHING. Illustrated . . .	*net*	1.00

ENOCH CRANE. A novel planned and begun by F. Hopkinson Smith and completed by F. Berkeley Smith. Illustrated	*net*	1.35

ENOCH CRANE

Lamont . . . was again beside her, pleading to take her home.
[*Page* 114

ENOCH CRANE

A NOVEL PLANNED AND BEGUN BY

F. HOPKINSON SMITH

AND COMPLETED BY

F. BERKELEY SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY
ALONZO KIMBALL

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1916

COPYRIGHT, 1916, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Published September, 1916

PREFACE

It was my father's practise, in planning a novel, first to prepare a most complete synopsis from beginning to end—never proceeding with the actual writing of the book until he had laid out the characters and action of the story—chapter by chapter.

This synopsis, which closely resembled the scenario of a play, he kept constantly enriching with little side-notes as they occurred to him—new ideas and points of detail.

So spirited were these synopses, and so clearly did they reflect the process of his mind, that by the few who saw them in the course of publishing consultations, or friendly confidence, they were remembered often after the finished novel had obliterated its constructive lines.

A scheme like this he had prepared for "Enoch Crane"—a story which, like "Felix O'Day," he had very much at heart. Once he had begun a novel it occupied his whole mind. He lived—as it were—with the characters he was developing, to the exclusion of all other work. He would talk to me constantly of their welfare or vicissitudes, and was often in grand good humor when any of them had proved themselves worthy by their wit, their courage, or their

good breeding. They all seemed to be old personal friends of his, whom by some chance I had never met.

My father had written three chapters of "Enoch Crane" when his brief illness came. Thus there has remained to me as a legacy of his unquenchably youthful spirit an unfinished novel, which to reach his readers needed to be wrought out on the lines he had so carefully laid down with that untiring enthusiasm with which he undertook everything; and this—his last story—it has been my privileged task to complete.

F. Berkeley Smith.

New York, 1916.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Lamont was again beside her pleading to take her home . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"I forbid you," he cried, facing him savagely, "to drag that child's name before this company" 210

"Well, neighbor, ain't a minute late, am I?" . . . 230

"Tell me you love me," he insisted 298

ENOCH CRANE

CHAPTER I

Joe Grimsby stood on the door-mat—a very shabby and badly worn door-mat, I must say—trying to fit his key into the tiny slit which, properly punctured, shot back the bolt which loosened the door, admitting him to the hallway leading to his apartment on the third floor of No. 99 Waverly Place.

"Somebody must have—no, here it is. Hello, Moses, is that you? I was just going to put my knee against it and——"

The old negro janitor bowed low.

"I wouldn't do dat, sir; 'spec' yo' hand is a little unstiddy. You young gemmen gets dat way sometimes, 'specially when so much is goin' on. Hold on till I turn up de gas. It gets dark so early, can't find yo' way up-stairs in de broad daylight, let alone de evenin'. I jes' lighted a fire in yo' room."

"Bully for you, Moses. And don't forget to come up-stairs when I ring. Mr. Atwater in yet?"

"No, sir; not as I knows on. Ain't seen nuffin' of him. 'Spec' he's a little mite how-come-you. I seen in de papers dat bofe on yo' was at de big ball last

night. Matilda was a-readin' it out while I was a-brushin' yo' shoes."

The young architect waved his hand in reply and mounted the stairs, his strong, well-knit frame filling the space between the wall and the banisters. He had mounted these same stairs in the small hours of the morning, but if he was at all fatigued by his night's outing, there was no evidence of it in his movements. He was forging his way up, his coat thrown back, arms swinging loose, head erect, with a lifting power and spring that would have done credit to a trained athlete.

Only once did he pause, and that was when the door of Miss Ann's apartment on the second floor was opened softly and the old lady's fluffy gray head was thrust out. He had never met the dear woman, but he lifted his hat in a respectful salute, and brought his body to a standstill until she had closed the door again.

She, no doubt, misunderstood the sound of his tread, a curious mistake had she thought a moment, for no one of the occupants of 99—and there were a good many of them—had ever mounted the dingy stairs two steps at a time, humming a song between jumps, except the handsome, devil-may-care young architect. The others climbed and caught their breath. And climbed again and caught another breath. So did most of the visitors. As for her own invalid sister, Miss Jane, who shared with her the rooms behind this partly opened and gently closed door, the poor lady had no breath of any kind to catch, and so wheezed up one step at a time, her thin, bird-claw fingers clutching

the hand-rail. It was she Miss Ann was waiting for, it being after five o'clock, and the day being particularly raw and uncomfortable, even for one in January.

He had reached his own door now, the one on the third floor—there was only one flight above it—and with the aid of a second key attached to his bunch made his way into the apartment.

The sight of his cosey sitting-room loosened up the bar of another song: the janitor's fire was still blazing, and one of the three big piano-lamps with umbrella-shades Moses had lighted and turned down was sending a warm glow throughout the interior.

Joe tossed his hat on a low table, stripped off his overcoat and coat, pushed his arms into a brown velvet jacket which he took from a hook in his bedroom, and settled himself at his desk, an old-fashioned colonial affair, which had once stood in his grandfather's home in his native town. Heaped up on a wide pad, the corners bound with silver clamps, was a pile of letters of various colors, shapes, and sizes.

These the young fellow smoothed out with a sweep of his hand, glancing hurriedly at the several handwritings, pulled out a drawer of the desk, opened a box of cigars, and selecting one with the greatest care, snipped its end with a cutter hung to his watch-chain. In the same measured way he drew a match along the under-side of the colonial, held the flame to the perfecto, and, after a puff or two to assure himself that it was in working order, proceeded leisurely to open his mail.

It is good to be young and good-looking and a favorite wherever you go. It is better yet to be good-natured, and well-born, and able to earn your living, and it is better still to so love the work by which you earn your daily bread that you count as nothing the many setbacks and difficulties which its pursuit entails.

Joe was all that; twenty-five, well-built, erect, strong of limb, well-dressed, even if sometimes a little bizarre in his outfit, more particularly in wide sombreros and low collars with loose ties; thoroughly content with his surroundings wherever they were, whether a student at the Beaux-Arts, living on the closest of allowances, or fighting his way in New York among his competitors; meeting each successive morning with a laugh and a song, and getting all the fun out of the remaining hours of which he was capable.

He had moved into these rooms but a fortnight before, and had at once proceeded to make himself as comfortable as his means and belongings would allow. His partner, Atwater, had come with him: there was the rent of the office to pay, and the wages of his two assistants, and they could save money by doubling up. With this in view, Joe had moved in some of the old furniture his father had left him, including the desk, and a set of shelves filled with books; had added a rare old Spanish sofa that had once stood in a hidalgo salon, to say nothing of the three or four easy chairs of the sofa-pillow-stuffed-armed variety, covered with chintz, that he had bought at an auction, and which had once graced his former quarters. Some small tables

had then been commandeered—two were now surmounted by big lamps; a rug thrown on the floor and another before the fire—good ones both, one being a Daghestan and the other a Bokhara; and the two young men proceeded to make themselves at home. The bedrooms, one Atwater's and the other Joe's, although simply furnished, were equally comfortable, and the bathroom all that it should be.

As to creature comforts, did not Moses bring them their breakfast, and did not his wife Matilda cook the same on her own stove in the basement in the rear? For their dinners, some one of the restaurants on 14th Street could always be counted upon, unless some Wall Street potentate, or one of his innumerable friends, or the mother of Joe's last lady love—he had a fresh one every month—laid a cover at her table in his honor.

His one predominant ambition in life, as has been said, was to succeed in his profession. His uncle had achieved both riches and distinction as one of the leading architects of his time and, divining Joe's talents, had sent him abroad to uphold the honor of the family, a kindness the young fellow never forgot, and an obligation which he determined to repay by showing himself worthy of the old man's confidence. If he had any other yearning, it was, as has also been said, to have a good time every moment of the day and night while the developing process was going on. And the scribe, who knew him well, freely admits that he succeeded, not only in New York, but in Paris.

When a posse of gendarmes followed a group of students along the Boul Miche who were shouting at the top of their voices their disapprovals or approvals, it made very little difference which, of some new law in the Latin Quarter, Joe's voice was invariably the loudest. When the room under the sidewalk at the Taverne was full, every seat occupied, and the whole place in an uproar, it was Joe who was leading the merriment.

When, upon the dispersal of the gay revellers from the Quart'z'Arts ball, the Champs-Elysées was made the background of a howling mob of bareskinned warriors of the Stone Age, Joe led the chorus, the only student in the group who was entirely sober, intemperance not being one of the ways in which he enjoyed himself.

It was, therefore, quite in keeping with his idea of what a normal life should be that, when he nailed up his shingle in his down-town office, and started in to earn a crust and a reputation, this same spirit of fun should have dominated his idle hours to the exclusion of everything else except the habit of falling in love with every pretty girl he met.

If the beautiful and accomplished and fabulously rich Mrs. A. had a ball, Joe invariably led the german. If there was a week-end party at Mrs. B.'s, Joe's engagements were always consulted and a day fixed to suit him. They couldn't help it really. There was an air about the young fellow that the women, both married and single, could not resist. The married ones generally counted on him to make their parties a suc-

cess, but the single ones manœuvred so as to be within arm's reach whenever Joe's partner was tired out and he ready for another.

Should you have tried to solve the problem of this ever-increasing popularity and, in marshalling your facts, had gone over his personal attractions—his well-groomed figure, never so attractive as in a dress suit, clear brown eyes, perfect teeth shining through straight, well-modelled lips shaded by a brown mustache blending into a close-cut, pointed beard, and had compared these fetching attractions with those possessed by dozens of other young men you knew, you would be still at sea.

Old Mrs. Treadwell, who, when Joe had sprained his ankle, had kept him at her country-seat for a whole week, came nearest to the solution. "Never thinks of himself, that young fellow." That's it. Hasn't an ego anywhere about him. Never has had. Always thinking of you, no matter who you are. And he is sanely polite. Treats an apple woman as if she were a duchess, and a duchess, whenever he runs across one, as first a woman—after that she can be anything she pleases.

This accounted in a measure for the number and quality of the several notes he was opening, one after another, his face lighting up or clouding as he perused their contents.

CHAPTER II

Moses was having a busy day. The front hall was packed full with a heterogeneous mass of miscellaneous furniture, the sidewalk littered with straw packing, kitchen utensils, empty bird-cages, umbrella-stands, crates of china, and rolls of carpet. Mr. Ebner Ford, late of Clapham Four Corners, State of Connecticut; Mrs. Ebner Ford, formerly Preston, late of Roy, State of North Carolina, and her daughter, Miss Sue Preston, were moving in.

Moses was in his shirt-sleeves, a green baize apron tied about his waist, a close-fitting skull-cap crowning his gray wool. There were spots on his cranium which the friction of life had worn to a polish, and, the January air being keen and searching, the old darky braved no unnecessary risks.

The force was properly apportioned. Mrs. Ford was in charge of the stowage, moving back, and hanging-up department. Mr. Ford had full charge of the sidewalk, the big furniture van and the van's porters. Moses was at everybody's beck and call, lifting one moment one end of a sofa, the other steadying a bureau on its perilous voyage from the curb to the back bedroom, while Miss Preston, with an energy born of young and perfect health, tripped up and down the few steps, pointing out to the working force this or

that particular chair, table, or clock most needed. All this that the already tired mother might get the room to rights with the least possible delay.

It was not the first time this young woman had performed this service. The later years of her life had been spent in various intermittent moves in and out of various houses since the gentleman from Connecticut had married her mother.

Her first experience had taken place some months after the unexpected wedding, when her stepfather—he was at that time a life-insurance agent—had moved his own bag and baggage into the family homestead. Shortly after he had elaborated a plan by which the entire family would be infinitely better off if a red flag should be hoisted out of the second-story window, and the old place knocked down to the highest bidder. He would then invest the proceeds in the purchase of some town lots in one of the larger cities up the State. They would then have a home of their own, more in keeping with the aspirations of his wife, who really had married him to escape her present poverty, and the welfare of his stepdaughter, whose sole ambition was to perfect herself in music, she being the possessor of a wonderful soprano voice.

In this new venture six houses were to be built; one they would live in, rent and cost free, the income from the other five supporting them all.

Then had come a hasty packing up and rather sudden departure for Norfolk, the houses being partly built, and none of them rented or sold, Mr. Ford hav-

ing abandoned life insurance and given his attention to a new dredging machine for use in the Dismal Swamp Canal. And then a third exodus to a small village near New York, where the promoter of a brilliant and entirely new adaptation of laundry machinery, never before imagined, and the formation of which was known among the favored few as The United Family Laundry Association, Limited, engrossed the distinguished engineer Mr. Ebner Ford's sole attention.

It was from this near-by village the fourth move had been made, the van and supplementary cart having absorbed the contents of a small house, situated on the outskirts of the town, that deluded individual having exchanged a year's rent for a delicately engraved sheet of paper, certifying that he was the proud possessor of ten shares of the company's preferred.

That these several shiftings, migrations, and rehandlings had had their effect on the family belongings could be seen by even the most cursory examination of the several articles littering the sidewalk. Even the old family sideboard—and every Southern family has an old-fashioned sideboard—lacked a brass door-handle or escutcheon here and there, and similar defects could be found in Mrs. Ford's high-poster, once the property of her dead mother, two of the carved feet being gone by reason of a collision in an extra-hazardous journey.

It was because of the knowledge gained in these experiences, as well as a fervent desire to get the whole matter over as quickly as possible, that the young girl

had taken charge of the "picking-out" department, so that each article might reach her mother in regular order, and in discrete corners as much as what was left of the old mahogany was saved.

She was again on the sidewalk, dragging out a rocker, ordering a crate here, and a bundle of fire-tongs there, when the gentleman from Connecticut must have got in her way, for she broke in in an authoritative tone of voice, much to Moses' astonishment, with:

"No, Mr. Ford, stop right where you are. Mamma doesn't want any more small things until she gets the big ones arranged, and don't you send them in!"

"My dear Sue, you will have to take them as they come."

"No, I'm not going to take them as they come. I'm going to take them as I want them. You've got plenty of room here, and you've got plenty of men to help. That wardrobe comes next."

"Well, but can't you take these here cushions?"

"Yes, send in the cushions, but that's the last, until I tell you what next."

The distinguished engineer raised his hands, opening his fingers in a deprecatory way, expressive of his firm belief that she would live to see the day when she would keenly regret her interference, and in subdued, almost apologetic, tones called Moses.

"Here, Moses—your name is Moses, ain't it?"

The darky nodded.

"Well, be good enough to carry this here bundle of cushions to Mrs. Ford. And be careful, Moses."

Moses, without a word in reply, swung the bundle to his shoulder, mounted the few steps and deposited the pillows at Mrs. Ford's feet, and resumed his place on the sidewalk. He was making up his mind as to the character and personality of the new tenants, and nothing had so far escaped him. The old janitor's likes and dislikes had a very important bearing on the status occupied by the various tenants.

Furthermore, his diagnosis was invariably correct.

Thus far, two things had impressed him. That the young lady should have addressed her stepfather as if he had been a mere acquaintance, and that that master of the house should have prefaced his order to him with a "be good enough." Nobody had ever, so far as he could remember, addressed him in any such way. His former master's customary formula, generally with a laugh, was: "Here, Moses, you infernal scoundrel." His later employers had been contented with Moses, Mose, or Mr. Harris (the latter he despised). The new young gentlemen had begun with Moses, and had then passed on to "You ebony gargoyle," or "Bulrushes," "Pottifer's Kid." But the order came direct as if they meant it, and was always carried out by him in the same kind of spirit. "Be good enough, eh," he kept saying to himself, "'spec' he ain't 'customed to nuffin'."

The young lady seemed to be cast in a different mould.

"That's too heavy for you, Uncle," she had said in a low, soft voice, the more surprising to him when he

remembered the tones in addressing her stepfather. He was struggling under the weight of one end of the dining-room table at the time. "Come here, one of you men, and help him. Put it down, Uncle. You'll break your poor old back, first thing you know."

"Thank you, young mistiss. 'Tis little mite heavy," he had answered humbly, as the leg he was carrying sagged to the sidewalk, adding as he watched her disappear again into the house: "Befo' God, she's one of my own people, dat she is. I ain't been called Uncle by nobody, since I went back home dat Christmas time."

The van was empty now, and the supplementary cart, carrying the odds and ends, a rusty, well-burnt-out stove, two pieces of pipe, a big mirror with a gilt frame, a set of wooden shelves, two wash-tubs, and on top, a dainty work-table with spindle legs, was being backed to the sidewalk.

Some article must have been forgotten or broken or scraped, for the language of the man from Clapham Four Corners had lost its soft edge, his outburst ending with:

"See here, you lunkhead, don't you handle that work-table as if it was a ton of coal. Don't you see you've broken the glass!"

The young girl had just emerged from the door.

"Oh, what a pity!" she cried. "I loved it so. No, please don't touch it again. I'll lift it down myself."

She had mounted a chair now which stood by the tail of the cart and, against the protest of the group,

was carefully disentangling the precious legs from the chaos of pipes, tubs, and stove-fittings.

"Oh, you darling little table! Nobody ever thought about you. It's all my fault. No, go away all of you. You shan't one of you touch it. I'll lift it down myself. Oh, the drawer has caught in that stove door! Uncle, won't you just push it back so I can——"

"Permit me to help this—" came a voice from behind. Before she could catch her breath, an arm reached forth, lifted the precious table clear of the entangling mass and, without waiting for protest or thanks, carried it into the house at the feet of the astonished mother. Then with a remark, "That he was glad to be of service," Mr. Joseph Grimsby, occupant of the third floor, backed out and rejoined the astonished girl.

"A lovely bit of Chippendale, is it not, Miss Ford? It is Miss Ford, isn't it? Yes, our old colored janitor told me you were expected to-day. I and my chum live up-stairs. But please don't worry about the glass. That is quite easily replaced. I must apologize for my intrusion, but when I saw what a beauty it was, and heard you say how you loved it, I had to help. There is nothing like Chippendale, and it's getting rarer every day."

"Oh, but you were very kind. It was my grandmother's and I have always used it since I was a girl. Thank you very much."

Joe was about to say: "That—" but checked himself in time—"if she would permit the digression, she

was still a girl, and a very pretty one." In fact, he had not seen any one quite as pretty for a very long period of time. He had thought so when he stood in the doorway, watching her efforts to save the table from further destruction. He had only a view of her back, but he had noticed in that brief glance the trim, rounded figure, curve of her neck, and the way her tight woollen sweater clung to her small waist and hips. He had caught, too, a pair of very small and well-shod feet.

When she turned in surprise and looked him square in the eyes, in one of those comprehensive, searching glances, and his own lenses had registered her fresh color, small ears, and dainty, enchanting mouth and teeth, the whole surrounded by a wealth of light, golden hair, escaping from the thraldom of a tam-o'-shanter hat, part of her working clothes, he would have taken an oath on a pile of Bibles as high as a church steeple that she was altogether the most radiantly attractive young woman he had ever met in the whole course of his natural existence.

This was not at all unusual. It was Joe's way with every fresh girl he met. Such hyperbole was only a safety-valve, giving vent to his enthusiastic appreciation. He had had similar outbursts over two or three since he had left Paris. He had not only *looked* a similar declaration into the eyes of the inamorata who had begun her letter with "Dearest," and ended it with an initial—the letter he had cremated and tucked away in the burial-plot of his forgetfulness—but he

had told her so in so many plain words, and had told her a lot of other things besides, which the young beauty had believed.

The scribe who knew them both will tell you that Sue Preston, despite Joe's panegyrics, was just a trim, tidy, well-built, rosy, and thoroughly wholesome girl, no prettier than half a dozen other Southern girls brought up in her own town, which she had left when the gentleman from Connecticut had married her mother. That her independence of speech and bearing, as well as her kindness, came from the fact that she was obliged to earn her own living with her voice, singing at private houses and teaching music. The life, which, while it had not dulled her enthusiasm or love for things worth the having, had taught her a knowledge of the world far beyond her years. This could have been detected in the short talk she had had with Moses, after Joe, having reached the limit of his intrusion, had lifted his hat in respectful admiration and taken himself off to his office, where he spent what was left of the morning pouring into Atwater's ears a wholly inflated account of the charms of the new arrival, and how plans must be laid at once to get on the friendliest terms possible with the occupants of the first floor.

"You ask me, young mistiss, who is dat gentleman?" Moses had rejoined in answer to her question, her eyes fixed on Joe's graceful, manly figure as he swung down the street.

"Dat's Mr. Grimsby, and dere ain't nobody moved

into dis house since I been here, and dat's eleven years next June, any better. Fust time I see him, I says to Matilda: 'Matilda, don't he look like Marse Robin when he was his age? He's got just de air of him.' Don't care for nobody dat ain't quality. Ain't you from the South, young mistiss?" Moses never forgot his slave days when he was talking to his own people.

"Yes, Moses, I'm from North Carolina."

"And de mistiss, too?"

"Yes; mother, too."

"But dat—dat—" the darky hesitated, "dat gentleman dat—dat married yo' ma. He ain't one our people, is he?"

The girl laughed, a crisp, sparkling laugh, as if she really enjoyed answering his questions.

"No, he's a Yankee."

"Gor a'mighty, I knowed it. 'Scuse me, young mistiss, for askin', but we got to get along together, and I'm goin' to do evertin' I can to please you."

Joe had turned the corner by this time, and her eyes again sought the old darky's.

"What does he do, this Mr. Grimsby?"

"I don't know, young mistiss; I think he builds houses. What dey call a architect."

"And how long has he been here?"

"'Bout two weeks, goin' on three now."

A curious expression now crossed her face.

"And is he always as polite as that to everybody he meets for the first time?"

It was Moses' turn to chuckle now. "I ain't never

seen him with nobody, fur dere ain't nobody 'round fit fur him to bow and scrape fur till you come, and you ain't seen de last of him, young mistiss, unless I miss my guess." And with a prolonged chuckle, Moses seized a chair, backed away with it to the house, and returned again to his duties on the sidewalk.

That the new tenant interested him enormously could be seen as the old negro stood watching his self-imposed supervision. He had been accustomed to all sorts of people since he had held his position, especially the kind that constantly moved in and out of the first floor. There had been inebriates who had been laid up for days at a time, broken-down bank clerks looking for another situation, with only money enough for the first month in advance, ending in final collapse and exit, with most of their furniture in pawn. There had been a mysterious widow, a rather flabby person, whose son was a reporter, and who came in at all hours of the night. And there had been a distinguished lawyer, who moved in for the summer and was going when the heating apparatus broke down on the first cold day.

But the gentleman from Connecticut represented a type which Moses had never seen before. His dress showed it, with a full suit of black, his white collar showing above his overcoat. His speech was another indication. Where most men used verbal ammunition at the rate of so many spoken words a minute, Ford's delivery was as rapid and continuous as the outpouring of a Gatling gun.

"How many times must I tell you to be careful, men? How often must I go on insistin' that you should not bump things on the sidewalk? This here furniture is made to sit on, not to be smashed into kindlin' wood. Easy there, now, on that bureau! Pull out the drawers. Quick, now! One at a time. And now let go of that other end. It's extraordinary how sensible men like you should go on ignorin' the simplest rules of safety. Sue, my dear, tell your dear mother that I am doin' the best I can. But that if everything is brought to a piecemeal, it's only what's to be expected. Out of the way, Moses, give them men plenty of room. There, that's more like it!"

That the two broad-backed porters in linen jumpers had for years passed everything from a piano-stool to a folding-bed from the top of the highest tenement in New York, without so much as a scrape of paint from the side walls, and that nothing that Ford had said or done made the slightest impression on them, was entirely clear to Moses as he listened to their harangue.

He had seen a busy clown at the circus picking up and dropping at a critical moment the ends of the carpet spread out on the sawdust, a remembrance which pumped up another chuckle in the old darky's interior.

When the sidewalk was cleared, the van and the supplementary cart emptied, and the entire belongings of the Ford family securely housed, and the door of the apartment discreetly closed, so that the passers

up and down the staircase might not become familiar with the various imperfections of the household gods, when I say what Moses called the biggest circus he had ever seen for many a day was over, that guardian of the house moved into the rear basement to talk it all over with Matilda.

The old woman—and she was very nearly as old as Moses, sixty-five if she was a day—was busy ironing, her head tied up in a big red bandanna, her shrewd eyes peering out of a pair of big-bowed spectacles.

"Well, is you through?" her eyes on her work, not on her husband.

"Yes; through!"

"Well, what you think of him?"

Moses had dropped into a chair now and begun to untie his big green baize apron, his morning work being over.

"I ain't got no think, Matilda. He can talk de legs off a iron pot. Dat's one of my thinks. Ain't never heard nuffin' like it. Jes' like one of dese patent-medicine fellers with a stand on de street corner."

"Well, is dat all?" She had dropped her iron now and with her hands on her hips was looking at him curiously.

"Dat's all. Unless I'm much mistuk, dat's all dere is to him. Jes' wind. De madam is sumfin' better. She looks as if she might have been quality afo' she struck him. But young mistiss is de real thing. How she can put up wid him is mo' 'an I can understand."

CHAPTER III

All the way to his office, Joe was planning for a better acquaintance with the girl on the first floor. He had had but a glimpse of the mother, but even that brief insight had convinced him that she was a woman of refinement, and must be handled with due regard for the conventionalities of life.

The father he had not seen, his eyes having been fastened on the trim figure of the girl in the close-fitting knitted jacket and tam-o'-shanter hat. He had heard more or less conversation in a high key, and had become aware of a strident voice soaring above the roar of the street, but he was too much occupied with the new arrival to give the incident further thought.

When Joe burst in, Atwater was in his shirt sleeves, poring over a big drawing, showing the ground-plan of a large office building for which the firm were competing.

"By Jove, Sam, we're in luck! Perfect stunner! Knocks cold anything you ever saw! Regular Hebe. Come here and I'll tell you all about it."

Sam moved aside his T-square and followed his partner into a small room, lighted by a punched-out skylight, which answered for their private office.

"Now, go on, Joe, and hurry up. What are you driving at? The Long Island woman has given us

her cottage, hasn't she? I thought that sketch of yours would fix her."

"Long Island woman be hanged, Sam. This is something brand-new. Early colonial. Martha Washington when she was a girl. Beauties of the republican court not in it! Prettiest little figure, and a pair of eyes that would drive you crazy. And——"

Sam reached forward and grabbed Joe's arm.

"What the devil are you talking about, Joe?"

"Miss Ford."

"What Miss Ford?"

"The girl on the first floor."

"Where?"

"Right below us, you lunatic! She got tangled up with the best bit of Chippendale I've seen for years, and I helped her out. Glass all smashed. Nearly broke her heart. Oh, you've got to see her, Sam, before you——"

Sam held both hands to his head, expressive of the fear that his precise and conservative mind was giving way.

"Joe, if it wasn't but ten o'clock in the morning, and I didn't know that you were plumb sober when I left you at breakfast an hour ago, I'd think you were boiling drunk. Now, pull yourself together, and give it to me straight. What are you raving about? Is it an order for a bungalow, or some girl who tramped up our stairs to sell you a 'Trow's Directory'?"

Joe threw up his arms and let out a laugh that made the two draftsmen in the next room raise their heads.

"None of 'em, you woodenhead. Listen, Sam, and I'll put a fresh curl in your hair. When I reached the sidewalk this morning, the whole place—hall, steps, and curb—were cluttered up with furniture! Everything from a flat-iron to a folding-bed was all over the lot. That new family—the one Moses was telling us about last night—were moving in. Mounted on a chair—just a plain kitchen chair, mind you—stood a girl—oh, a daisy girl!—holding on to a dressing-table, its legs tied up in a stove. And, Sam——"

"Her legs tangled up in—what are you talking about, Joe?"

"Not hers, you idiot! The Chippendale's."

"Well, then, what's the girl got to do with it?"

"Don't I tell you she owned the table? She was all broken up. Called her 'darling.' Was just bursting into tears when I made a dive, grabbed the eighteenth-century relic by one corner, lifted it over everybody's head, carried it inside, and laid it at the feet of a rather demoralized woman—no doubt her mother—her head tied up in a green veil. Hence, 'Thanks,' grateful looks, and 'Oh, so kind of you, sir'—that sort of thing. Returned to the girl, apologized, more 'Oh, thank yous,' and retired in good order. A perfect stunner, I tell you, Sam! I knew we'd strike it rich when you picked out that old rookery. We'll begin to live now. She's right below. Go down any time she sends for us. I've been thinking it over, and the first thing to do is to have a tea. Got to be hospitable, you know. We've just moved in, and

they've just moved in. We've been there the longest, and, therefore, we make the advances. That would be the decent thing to do if there wasn't any girl. Don't you think so?"

Sam's mind had begun to wander. He had listened to a dozen just such outbursts in the past six months.

Joe rattled on:

"Of course, we must invite the mother and father. They won't come. He won't, anyway. Mother might, so as to find out who we were and how we lived, and after that it will be easy-going with the daughter. I'll send for Higgins and his sister, and you get Matty Sands and her mother, and——"

Sam began moving toward the door.

"Better cut the tea out, Joe," he said curtly.

"But you haven't seen the girl; if you had, you'd——"

"No, I haven't seen the girl, and I don't want to see the girl. Bad enough to give up a day's work. We've got a lot to do, you know. A tea smashes the whole afternoon. Make it at night."

"Too expensive. Must have something to eat, and maybe something to drink. Moses and his wife could work the hot-water-and-sandwiches racket, all right, but a supper, no—can't see it—break us."

"Well, make it a musicale, and send for Paul Lambing and his violin. I'll do the piano. Maybe your girl can sing."

"No; she can't sing."

"How do you know she can't sing?"

"Because she don't look like a girl who can sing. I can tell every time."

"Well what *does* she look like?"

"She's a perfect stunner, I tell you."

"Yes, you've said that three times already. Now give us the details. Elevation, openings, cornice, roof line, and——"

Again Joe roared, this time with his head thrown back, his white teeth glistening. "That's just like you, Sam, you never had a soul above bricks and mortar, and you never——"

"Well, I don't go out of my head over every petticoat I come across." He was inside the drafting-room now, and was holding the door open between them. "And, another thing, Joe, take my advice and stop where you are. The girl no doubt's all right, and the mother may be all right, but the father is a queer one. Looks like a cross between a tract distributer and a lightning-rod man. Go slow, Joe," and he shut the door between them.

By the end of the week the Fords had settled down in their new quarters, so far as outside activities were concerned. But what was going on inside the unlucky suite of rooms, no one but Matilda knew. Moses had volunteered the remark, that when a carpet was full of holes "it didn't make no diff'unce which side you laid down." But whether this mutilation was discovered in one of Fords' Axminsters or in his own floor coverings, Joe did not catch, nor did he press the inquiry.

His impatience, however, to get inside the sacred precinct was not cooled, and he was still at fever heat. Nor had the proposed entertainment been abandoned, Joe forcing the topic whenever the opportunity offered, Sam invariably side-tracking it whenever it was possible. To-night, however, Joe was going to have it out, and Sam, being entirely comfortable, was prepared to listen. Neither of them had engagements which would take them from their rooms, and so Joe had donned his brown-velvet jacket, and Atwater had slipped his thin body into what Joe called his "High Church" pajamas, an embroidered moiré-antique dressing-gown, cut after the pattern of a priest's robe, which a devoted aunt had made for him with her own hands, and which, to quote Joe, "should always be worn with smoked glasses as safeguards against certain dangerous forms of ophthalmia."

Joe, finding another mail heaped up on his pad—there was always a mail for Joe—had seated himself at his desk, his legs stretched out like a ten-inch gun, his shapely feet in thin-soled, patent-leather shoes, resting on one corner of the colonial. Sam occupied the sofa, the slim curve of his girth almost parallel to the straight line of the Hidalgo's favorite lounge.

Several schemes looking to a further and more lasting acquaintance had been discussed and rejected. One was to leave their own door ajar, be in wait until Fords' was opened, and then in the most unexpected manner meet some one of the family on the stairs, Joe's affability to do the rest.

Another was to waylay Ford as he entered from the street, engage him in conversation, and keep it up until he had reached his door, when Joe would be invited in and asked to make himself at home. This last was Atwater's. Indeed, both of these "vulgar absurdities" (Joe's view-point) were Atwater's.

"Well, then," retorted Sam, "go down like a man —*now*. It isn't too late. It's only nine o'clock. Ring the bell or pound on his door, and present your card. That's the way you would do anywhere uptown. Try it here. Chuck that box of matches this way, Joe, my pipe's out."

Joe chucked, stretched his shapely legs another inch, and resumed:

"No, won't do. Might all be out. All up with us then. Lightning-rod man would wait a week, watch until he saw us go out, tiptoe up-stairs and slip his card under the door. I couldn't call again without upsetting everything. They'd think I was trying to 'butt in.' Better way would be to write the mother a note."

"What kind of a note? Here, catch this box."

"That's the devil of it, Sam, I don't exactly know. I'm thinking it over."

"Well, I'll tell you what to say, and I'm not thinking it over. Say you're dead stuck on her daughter, and want to see more of her. That you're going to get up a musicale which you can't afford, and that you—oh, drop it, Joe, she'll be asking us both to tea before the week is out, and before a month the whole

family will be borrowing everything we own, and we'll have to move out to get rid of them. I got a crack at the mother a day or two ago. You didn't see her this morning because you had gone up on ahead, but a boy rang her bell as I passed. One of these short, old family portraits kind of woman. Round and dry as a bunch of lavender. Girl might be well enough, but my advice is to cut it all out. Get a new line. We've got a lot of work to do. I've carried the ground-plan as far as I can go, and you've got to pitch into the details."

Joe had dropped his feet to the floor, had squared himself at his desk, and was half through a note. Sam had finished his outburst. His partner's advice on matters connected with their profession Joe always respected; to listen to his views on social affairs was so much wasted time.

The note finished, Joe shifted his seat and faced his partner, the letter in his hand.

"Now, shut up, you hod-carrier, and pay attention. This is what I call a corker! And you needn't try to alter a line, because it's going just as it is.

"Dear Mrs. Ford:

"Would you think me presuming if I asked you to relieve the loneliness of the two young men who occupy the third floor over your head? Mr. Atwater and I have invited a few friends to come to our rooms on Friday of this week at nine o'clock to listen to some good music, and we would be most grateful if you and Mr. Ford and your daughter would join the company,

"Yours sincerely,

"Joseph Grimsby.

"How's that?"

Atwater settled himself deeper into the sofa, gathered the ends of the flaming robe closer about his thin body, and jammed a pillow under his head; but no word escaped him.

"Well, I'm waiting," insisted Joe; "what do you think of it?"

"That you'll get the mother, who'll come to spy out the land; that the lightning-rod man will stay away, and that the girl, if she's got any sense, and I think she has from what you've told me, will wait for the old lady's report, and that that will end it. These people have come here to get away from everybody. That girl, no doubt, is all they've got, and they don't want distinguished young architects mousing around. Save your money, Joe."

"That letter's going, Sam, just as I've written it. It's the letter of a gentleman. Never will offend any lady, and she looks like one. Wait till I seal it. It ought to go at once—now—this very night. You get out of that Biblical bedquilt and get into your coat, slip down and leave it at the door. That will give me another chance in case this thing slips up. Could then make a suggestion about having the glass repaired. Never thought of that until this minute."

"I wouldn't get off this sofa, Joe, for all the girls in New York. Put a stamp on it, and I'll mail it in the morning. There's no hurry. We're going to be here all winter."

"Mail it, you half-breed! Mail a letter, and you in the same house!"

"Well, send it down by Moses."

"Well, that's more like it! Touch that bell—will you?—you're nearest."

Sam reached out and pressed a button within a foot of his head. Joe slipped the note into an envelope, sealed it with violet wax, waited until the little puddle was big enough to engulf the Grimsby crest engraved on his seal-ring, and was about to repeat the summons, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in."

The darky entered, his back crooked like a folding jack-knife.

"I knowed dat was yo' ring, Mr. Joe, before it got done tinglin'." A new—or rather an added joy—had crept again into the old slave's heart—the joy of serving a white man whom he respected, and who was kind to him.

"You're wrong, Gargoyles, that was Mr. Atwater's ring!"

"Well, den you gib his touch." And again Moses' back was bent double.

"Wrong again, Moses. That the bell rang at all is entirely owing to the fact that the button was within reach of the distinguished architect's hand. Had it been six inches farther down the wall, I should have been obliged to tingle it myself."

"Yas, sah."

"The distinguished architect, Moses, suffers from

an acute form of inertia, *Moses*, owing to the fact that he was born tired."

"Yas, sah."

"And furthermore, Moses, he has so little knowledge of the ordinary civilities of life, that but for your kindly help he would have intrusted this delicately addressed missive, illumined with the Grimsby crest, to a cast-iron box decorating a street corner."

"Yas, sah."

Any further comment would have been presumptuous. None of this conversation, as he well knew, having been addressed to himself.

"And now, stop genuflecting, you chunk of darkness, and listen. Step down-stairs, rap gently and discreetly at the closed portal of the Ford family and pass in this letter."

"Yes, sah, and den what?" He was included now.

"Nothing what, unless the young lady should open the door, when you will ask her if there is any answer. If she says there is, and gives it to you, you will bring it up here on the dead run."

"And s'pose dat de—dat de—well, dat de gemman himself opens it?"

"What, the letter?"

"No, sah; de do'."

"Hand him the letter all the same, say there is no answer; none of any kind, and to prove it, amble down into your own coal-hole."

Moses reached for the missive, laid it across the creases of his wrinkled palm, and with a remark, "dat

his old marse, Marse Robin, had one of dem little seals hangin' to his watch-fob," closed the door behind him.

With the departure of the darky a waiting calm fell upon the room. Joe resumed his task at his desk, and Sam continued to flatten out the several parts of his body until each inch of his lower length had found a resting-place.

"Everybody out, or Moses would have come up again," remarked Joe, glancing at the clock, "been gone five minutes now."

"Holding a council of war. Mother in tears, and the girl in a rage. At the present moment the lightning-rod man is looking for a club. My advice to you is to get out of that velvet jacket, or it will be mussed up before he gets through with you."

Five minutes more. No Moses. No irate protector of the family. No news of any kind.

Nor was any further information available the following morning when Moses brought in their breakfast. "Didn't nobody open de do' but de *hired* girl, so I left it," was his report. Moses' mental distinction between a hired girl and a servant was convincingly apparent in the tones of his voice.

Nor was there any word sent to the office, nor had any message reached their room when Joe arrived home to dress for dinner. The nearest approach to a possible communication had been when he caught sight of Miss Sue's back as she tripped out of the front door, just before he reached the sidewalk. But she

was gone before he could have overtaken her, had he so wished, the unanswered note having now set up an insurmountable barrier between them.

Positive information reached him on his return home that night. He had occupied a front seat at Wallack's, Mrs. Southgate having given a debutante a chance to be seen. Sam had kept awake and was waiting for him.

"Well, it's come, Joe," he shouted, before the absentee had closed the door behind him.

"What's come?"

"The letter. She slipped it under the door after you left, and I came mighty near stepping on it when I came in half an hour ago. Looks like a railroad time-table, or a set of specifications."

"The devil you did! What does she say? Is she coming?"

"How do I know? Haven't opened it. It's addressed to you."

Joe caught up the letter, dropped into a chair and tore apart the envelope. Inside was the missive and a printed enclosure.

Sam edged nearer, awaiting the verdict, his eyes reading Joe's face as he scanned the lines.

Joe read on to the end, and passed the open sheet to Atwater without a word. It bore the image and superscription of "The United Family Laundry Association, Limited," and was signed by the vice-president and treasurer.

"Read it, Sam, and go out in the hall and swear.

G-r-i-m-e-s-b-y, eh? Don't even know how to spell my name. Here, hand it back, and listen.

"JOSEPH GRIMESBY, ESQ.,

"Dear Sir: My wife can't come. Neither can her daughter. But I will show up at nine o'clock. I enclose one of our circulars. Look it over. The last sale of our stock was at par.

"Yours, etc.,

"EBNER FORD,

"*Vice-President and Treasurer.*

"Her daughter!" exploded Joe. "What does that mean?"

Sam staggered to the sofa, and fell along its length in a paroxysm of laughter.

"Magnificent! Superb! He'll show up, will he? Of course he'll show up—all of him. Oh, what a lark!"

Joe made a pianissimo beat with his outstretched hand in the hope of reducing Sam's volume of protest, and scanned the letter once again.

"Just my luck!" he muttered. "Always some vulgarian of a father or crank mother gets in the way. No, we won't have any party. I'm going to call it off. Tell him I've just got a telegram. Sent for from out of town. Professional business—that sort of thing. A man who will write a letter like that in answer to one addressed to his wife would be an intolerable nuisance. Couldn't get rid of him with a dynamite bomb. I'll fix him, and I'll do it now," and he squared himself at his desk.

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Joe," returned Sam.

"Now, the girls are not coming, we'll have the party, nuisance or no nuisance. He'll be more fun than a half-starved Harlem goat munching a tin sign. We'll cut out Matty Higgins and the other girls, and make it a stag. Just you leave it to me. I'll take care of him, and if there's anything in him, I'll get it out. If he can't sing, he'll dance. If he won't do either, I'll stand him on his head."

That Sam should be willing, even enthusiastic, over the admission of any one member of the Ford family was a point gained in Joe's mind. Whether, when he had once gained admission to the family circle, he could stand the surroundings, he would decide upon later. Mrs. Ford was evidently a woman of breeding and refinement; her daughter was—well, there was no use discussing that with Sam. Sam never went out of his way to be polite to any woman, young or old. As to Ford, Senior, there must be a good side to him or he could not be where he was. There was no question that he was unaccustomed to the usages of good society; his note showed that. So were a lot of other men he knew who were engrossed in their business.

Yes, he would have the party, and the next week he would give a tea, whether Sam was willing or not, and Miss Ford would pour it, or he would miss his guess. To keep on living on the top floor of the same house, day after day, and that girl two flights below, and not be able to do more than wish her "good morning" when he met her on the stairs—perhaps not even that—was, to a man of his parts, unthinkable. Yes,

the party was the thing, and it would be a stag. And he would send for the fellows the very next day, which was done as soon as he reached his office, both by note and messenger. "Just to whoop things up in the new quarters," ran the notes, and, "Well, then, all right, we'll expect you around nine," rounded up the verbal invitations. Lambing was to arrive early so that he and Sam could arrange one of their latest duets, Atwater to rattle the keys, and Lambing to scrape the catgut. Talcott, the portrait-painter, was also to come. Babson, a brother architect, who had won the gold medal at the League, Sampson, Billings, and a lot more. For refreshments there would be a chafing-dish and unlimited beer in bottles, which Moses was to serve, and a bowl of tobacco, not to mention a varied assortment of pipes, some of clay, with a sprinkling of corn-cobs, the whole to be gladdened by such sandwiches as Matilda could improvise from sundry loaves of baker's bread and boiled ham. These last Joe attended to himself; the musical and literary features of the evening being left in the hands of his partner. In this was included the standing on his head the principal guest of the evening, provided that worthy gentleman was incapable of furnishing any other form of diversion.

CHAPTER IV

The stranger in passing Enoch Crane on the street would have been likely to have turned and said: "There goes a crusty old gentleman"—he would not have omitted the word "gentleman," for that he looked and was.

Fifty years had moulded his appearance to a nicety in accordance with his mode of life, which was, for the most part (when he was not up-town at his club, or down-town at his office) passed in solitary confinement in the top-floor suite.

He was a man of medium height, who carried his stubborn head low bent from his shoulders, like most thinkers, though the rapid upward glance out of his keen brown eyes was quick and piercing—even commanding at times.

What remained of his gray hairs were neatly parted on the side and as carefully smoothed over a cranium surmounting a broad, intelligent forehead, the bushy eyebrows denoting a man of shrewd perception, shadowing a grave face framed in a pair of cropped side-whiskers. These met with a mustache nearly white, and as stiff as a tooth-brush, that bristled over a mouth whose corners curned downward in repose; when he opened his lips, they revealed his even lower teeth, giving him the tenacious expression of a bulldog.

When he smiled, which was rarely, two seams bordering the chop side-whiskers deepened in the effort. When he laughed, there radiated upon these still rarer occasions, tinier wrinkles from the corners of his eyes. Sham and affectation he despised. Noise made him grit his teeth, and any undue outburst of geniality he regarded in the light of a personal insult. No one would have dared slap Enoch Crane on the back.

Years ago he had looked in the glass, decided he was ugly and, with the wisdom of a philosopher, thought no more about it. He was punctilious, nevertheless, about his dress—his favorite trousers being of white-and-black check shepherd's plaid, and his coat and waistcoat of dark-gray homespun. On special occasions these were replaced by decent black broadcloth, which, like the rest of his clothes, were kept conscientiously brushed by Moses and hung in the big closet off his bedroom—the one next to a small wash-closet, provided with a cracked basin, and two worn, nickeled faucets, out of which the water dribbled, droned, and grumbled, as if angry at being summoned as far up as the top floor.

As for the generous square living-room itself adjoining, its four windows commanding a view of both the back yard and Waverly Place, there remained barely an inch of wall space from floor to ceiling that did not hold a memory; old prints and older pictures in the tarnished gilt frames he had picked them up in, all these hung over three packed shelves of books. There was, too, a blackened fireplace, a mahogany desk, its

cubby-holes choked with papers and old pipes, and opposite, a high cabinet of rosewood, its glass doors curtained in faded green silk, screening some excellent port, and the sermons of Spurgeon, two volumes of which lay among the heap of papers piled on the round centre-table directly back of Enoch's favorite arm-chair.

Though the evening was mild, it did not prevent Enoch from having a cheery fire in his grate, or from settling himself before it, sunk in the generous leather arms of his favorite chair. He had, too, for company a short-stemmed, brier pipe purring contentedly between his teeth, and an early edition of "Vanity Fair" open upon his knees.

Mr. Enoch Crane's door was closed as tight as his lips when the agent of The United Family Laundry Association rapped. Ebner Ford's rap indicated that he was used to knocking at doors where he was not needed. His career as an agent had made him past master in intrusion and provided him with a gift of speech, both the result of long experience.

At Ford's summons, Enoch started irritably, laid his pipe beside Mr. Thackeray's masterpiece, rose with a scowl, shot an annoyed glance at his door, and striding over to it with a grunt, flung it open wide to the intruder with a curt nod of recognition.

"Couldn't help paying my respects," grinned Ford; "must be neighborly, you know," and with that he advanced with a smile of assurance across the threshold.

Enoch had not opened his lips.

"Neighborly," shouted Ford, fearing he was deaf.

"Yes," said Enoch. "I recognize you perfectly—Mr.—Mr.—er——"

"Ford," returned the other, the grin broadening, his outstretched hand seeking Enoch's, the other fumbling in the pocket of his waistcoat for his business card. Both the card and the hand Enoch accepted in silence.

"Looks comfy and homelike enough here," blurted out Ford, glancing around him. "I tell my wife, there's nothin' like——"

"Be seated," intervened Enoch, waving his visitor to the armchair. "Well, Mr.—er—Ford, what can I do for you?" He snapped out an old gold watch attached to a chain of braided human hair, and stood regarding his visitor with an expression of haste and annoyance. "Forgive me if I am brief," he added briskly, as Ford flung himself into the proffered chair, "but I was about to go out when you knocked—a club meeting which I must attend—an important meeting, sir."

"Well, now, that's too bad. Must go, eh? Thinks I, as I told my wife, you'd be in to-night, and we could have a good old talk together—seeing we was neighbors. Got to go, have you?" and Ford sank deeper into the armchair, stretching out his long legs before the fire. "Well, that's right, never pays to be late—reminds me of that story about the feller who was runnin' to catch the train for Chicago and met a red-headed girl and a white horse on the way—old man

Degraw used to tell this up in Syracuse—I can hear him now." Here he emitted a thin, reminiscent laugh—cut short by Enoch.

"You do not seem to comprehend, sir, that I am pressed for time," interrupted Enoch testily, again snapping out his watch. This time he held its dial out for Ebner Ford's inspection. "Eighteen minutes of nine now, Mr. Ford—our meeting is at nine."

"Ain't you a little fast?" remarked the latter, pulling out his own. "Funny how I got that watch," Ford rattled on with an insistence that keyed Enoch's nerves to the quick.

Enoch had been bothered with many of the inmates in his time, but Ford's effrontery was new to him. The very ease with which he had settled himself in the proffered chair set the muscles of the bulldog jaw twitching. Forced as he had been to open his door to him, nothing but his innate sense of breeding had, he felt, allowed the man to cross his threshold. What he regretted most now was that he had asked him to be seated. Ford's hail-fellow-well-met manner sent the hot blood in him tingling. Twice during the account of the remarkable history of the watch Enoch had tried to check him and failed; he might as well have tried to halt the street vender of a patent medicine, selling with both hands to a gullible crowd. Only when his visitor had changed the subject to a rapid-fire eulogy over the hospitality of the young men on the floor beneath, touching at length upon the party of the night before—the wisdom of Mrs. Ford—the

price of rent in other towns—and the care he had always observed in giving his daughter the best education money could buy, including French and piano lessons, did Enoch manage to dam the torrent of his volubility with:

"Mr. Ford, you must consider our interview at an end, sir—I am late and must be going," and with that he strode over to the bedroom closet for his coat and hat.

Ebner Ford slowly rose to his feet.

"Want any help?" he ventured as he watched Enoch dig a closed fist into the sleeve of his night-coat.

"Thank you," said Enoch curtly, wrenching himself into the rest of the ulster, "I'm not so old but that I can dress myself."

"What I'd like to say," continued Ford, as Enoch searched the corners of the closet for his night-stick, found it, and started to turn down the Argand burner on the centre-table, "is—that it makes an almighty big difference what kind of a house you're in—don't it?—as I told Mrs. Ford, we couldn't have struck a better place—folks in it make a difference, too. Don't know when I've enjoyed myself more'n I did last night. Quite a party, Mr. Crane—you missed it. Big-hearted fellers, both of 'em. We certainly had a royal time. Sorry you couldn't make it, friend—you were invited, of course——"

In reply, the Argand burner sank to a dull blue flame. Enoch led the way in the semidarkness to his door.

"Some day when you've got more time," continued Ford, "I'd like to show you just about the slickest laundry plant this side of Broadway. What we done was to get the best machinery money can buy, and we're not sorry. Take our flat work alone. Fourteen steam-mangles, and seven wringers—figure that out and you'll see how much business we do a month. Stocks above par, Mr. Crane; no man could ask a better investment for his money. Now, there's a hundred shares preferred that——"

"After you, sir," said Enoch, as he slammed his door shut, turned the key in the lock, and hurried his unwelcome visitor before him down the creaky, carpeted stairs.

"At seven per cent," rattled on Ford over his shoulder as he descended and halted at the Grimsby-Atwater door. "Think it over, neighbor."

"I bid you good night, sir," said Enoch, quickening his pace past him.

"Damn his impertinence!" he muttered to himself as he reached the front door, opened it, closed it with a click, and rushed for a horse-car en route to his club.

CHAPTER V

Since the coming of the Fords the house in Waverly Place had awakened. Sue's presence had had its effect from cellar to roof. No sunbeam that ever smiled into a dungeon could have been more welcome. The gloomy old stairs zigzagging up to the top floor seemed more cheerful, and the narrow hallways it led to less dingy. Even Aunt Matilda's cat—a scared and fat-headed old mouser who had refused half through January to leave its warm refuge under her stove in the basement—could now be seen nibbling and cleaning her paws as far up as the top carpeted step on Enoch's floor.

There radiates from the personality of a pure young girl like Sue something strangely akin to sunshine, something indefinable, luminous, and warm, which no one yet has been quite able to describe—any more than one can define "charm"—that which touches the heart, neither can we place our finger upon that thin, wavering border line between friendship and love—a pressure of the hand, a glance of the eyes, a smile, a sudden gaze of sympathy and understanding, and we stumble headlong across the frontier into the land of adoration. To *fall* in love! What nonsense! We *rise*, with love tingling through our veins—pounding at our temples, its precious treasure our own, safe forever, we believe, in our beating hearts.

Ah! yes indeed, it has ever been so, and it always will be. Why is it that Cupid, the god of love, has always been depicted as a frail little cherub, when the truth is he is a giant, dominating, relentless, strong as death—who swings the whole world at his beck and call. How much misery, doubt, and happiness he has conceived and fashioned to suit him since the world began (bless his little heart!) it is quite impossible to compute. Eve and Adam are unfortunately dead, or we should have it at first-hand from both of them.

Sue was not only beautiful—she was fresh, and young, and cheery, with a frank gleam in her clear blue eyes, a complexion like a rose, the sheen of gold in her fair hair—a lithe grace to her slim, active body—pearly teeth, and a kind word for every one who deserved it.

No wonder that Joe Grimsby impulsively lost his head and his heart to Sue at first sight of her. More than a week had elapsed, and although he had had from that young lady little more encouragement than his buoyant imagination supplied, he was far from disheartened. What really had occurred, was that he had met his ideal face to face on the stairs the day after the party, and she had thanked him for inviting her, rather coldly, Joe thought. Indeed it had been quite a formal little meeting after all. He had expressed his sorrow at her not being able to come, and she had expressed hers—quite as formally as a strange girl at a tea might, and he being too innately well-bred a gentleman to force matters, had accepted her

proffered little hand with more added regrets, and shaken it as punctiliously as he was wont to do the hands of his various hostesses in bidding them good night. And so she went up-stairs and he went down, not, however, without a beating heart over the interview, brief and unsatisfactory as it had been, and a firm resolution to call on her mother—which he did the very next day, and received word from the Irish maid of all work who opened the door, that "Mrs. Ford begged to be excused." The truth was that this Southern lady did not care to know the young men in the house, and as for Sue, the oversudden invitation to meet the young architects of the third floor had left more of an impression of distrust than desire.

As for Joe, Sam Atwater's better sense and advice had only the effect it usually does in such painful cases, of fanning into a blaze Joe's infatuation and spiriting on his stubborn determination to convince Sue Preston of its sincerity. Alas! Joe had reached that stage among young architects in love, of covering half the margins of his quarter-scale drawings with pictorial memories of Sue—sketching with his HB lead pencil her clean-cut, refined profile, detailing with infinite pains the exact curve of her lovely mouth, expressing as best he could the tenderness in her eyes, and the precise way in which she wore her hair, half hiding her small, pink ears—in fact, he got to dreaming hopelessly over her as he drew, and forgot in the second draft of the Long Island woman's cottage important members of cornices, windows, and doors, laying in cross-sec-

tions and elevations in a scandalous, sloppy way, until Atwater finally had to call a halt over his shoulder with: "For Heaven's sake, old man, cut it out," at which Joe grinned, and with good-natured embarrassment promised to really get down to work.

He had declared to Sam Atwater in his outburst of enthusiasm at the office that Sue could not sing. He was positive of this—"She did not look like a girl who could sing"—whereas if Sue possessed one great gift, it was her splendid soprano voice. Her voice was her very life, her whole ambition, a possession far more valuable than the whole worthless lot of Ebner Ford's business ventures combined, and wisely enough Sue realized that, whatever might happen to the always uncertain budget of the Ford family, at least with her concert work and her teaching, she could make her own living. When her stepfather's six-house venture had failed, it was Sue who came to the rescue—with what she had earned during the two years previous, singing in the smaller towns of Connecticut, giving lessons wherever she could, mostly in Ebner Ford's home town of Clapham, the very town in which her mother had married him ten years before to escape from impending poverty.

It may be seen, therefore, that the hard struggle the stepdaughter had gone through had left her with a far more serious knowledge and view of life than either Joe or the rest of the inmates of No. 99 Waverly Place were in the least conscious of.

Sue thoroughly understood her stepfather; briefly,

she regretted his methods, and still wondered how her mother could have ever married him, poor as they were. Inwardly, too, she trembled over his wildcat schemes, none too overscrupulous at best, while his hail-fellow-well-met manner, which he assumed upon any occasion when he saw a commission for himself hanging loose about the stranger, grated upon her. Indeed she knew him thoroughly, just as he was, bombastic varnish, vagaries, common self-assurance, and all. Behind closed doors in the intimacy of his home, before her mother and herself, Ebner Ford was a different man. His respect for his stepdaughter's wishes and better judgment was often one of ill-tempered resignation.

He dared not disagree with his wife—a short, thickset little woman, several years his senior, addicted to side-combs, opinions of her own, and an extravagant way of boasting to others of her South Carolinian ancestry, and carefully avoiding any mention of her husband's from central Connecticut.

Now it happened that that dear little old spinster, Miss Ann Moulton, who lived with her invalid sister on the second floor, was the first to really know Sue.

These two unmarried sisters had lived together since they were girls. They had a little property, just enough to provide for the modest apartment they were living in, and were anywhere from fifty to sixty years old. You could not possibly tell their exact age by looking at them, and, of course, they would not have told you had you asked them. They were both small, very much alike—little, gray, dried-up women. Both very refined, very gentle in their manners, gentle of voice,

too. Miss Ann was the stronger of the two. She was the manager. Upon her frail, little person fell all the responsibility, their only relative being a brother who lived West, and who managed what little property they had. She had no one else to look after her affairs, and he was a lazy brother at that.

As for Miss Jane, the sister, she had always been an invalid. Her frail hands were strangely transparent when held to the light, her voice weak, her step uncertain, and her hair, like Miss Ann's, nearly silver-white. On the street you could hardly tell the two sisters apart. They were so much alike, and dressed alike, which they had always done since they were children, and yet they were not twins. There *was* a difference, however; Miss Jane's cheeks were sunken, and there were dark circles under her patient, gray eyes. She never let any one know she was an invalid; neither did Miss Ann mention it. It had all happened so many years ago, but it was as clear in Jane Moulton's memory as if it had happened yesterday: Her gasping for breath, her failing strength as she fought on in the grip of an ebb-tide. His sharp cry to her to keep her head, then his strong arm about her —blackness—then the beach, and he whom she loved, who had given his life for hers, lying drowned upon it.

A small daguerreotype of him hung above her bed; one taken when he was eighteen, the year they were engaged.

The Misses Moulton's apartment was furnished in a various and curious collection of quaint little round

tables with spindle legs, a Franklin stove burning wood, some old family portraits in oval gilt frames, and high-post bedsteads for each of the bedrooms, the sunny one being Miss Jane's. There were big easy chairs covered with chintz in the sitting-room, and an assortment of different kinds of china, suggesting relics of several family collections; none of them matched—three teacups and saucers of one set, and four of another, some in gold and lustre. They had but one servant—Mary—an American, who came from up New York State, a motherly woman of fifty, fat, serious, and good-natured.

Sue had been giving a singing lesson as far up-town as East 46th Street, to the daughter of a wealthy alderman, who owned a brownstone, high-stooped house, grafted intact from the last political election. This house was a block above the railroad bridge on Lexington Avenue, and there being no cars running to-day, owing to a strike on the Third Avenue horse-car line, Sue had been obliged this wretched January day, with the streets swimming in slush under a fine, drizzling rain, to reach her destination on foot. After her lesson she had crossed the bridge spanning the Grand Central tracks, and found her way back to Waverly Place by way of Madison Avenue.

Stairs have a habit of forcing acquaintanceships, and making friends, a way of introducing strangers, who otherwise would not dare speak to each other, of bringing neighbors face to face, and providing them

with a firm foothold until they knew each other better. Where Joe Grimsby had failed on the stairs, Miss Ann Moulton succeeded. Miss Ann had put on her bonnet to do an errand, closed the door of her sitting-room, and stood in the dim light of the landing, buttoning a new pair of lisle-thread gloves she had purchased the day before at the big Stewart store, just as Sue, wet and tired from her lesson up-town, came up the stairs, her cloak and hat glistening with rain. As she neared the Moultons' landing, she caught sight of the little old maid nervously struggling over the top button of her left-hand glove.

"Won't you let me help you?" ventured Sue, as she reached the landing. "New gloves are so difficult to button."

"Oh, please—I pray you—don't bother," returned Miss Ann, flushing with embarrassment, but Sue insisted, briskly laid the thin wrist in the palm of her hand, quickly extracted a hairpin from where it had nestled in her fair hair, and so deftly buttoned the new gray glove, that before Miss Ann could further protest the button was snug and safe in its buttonhole.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you so much," stammered the little spinster. Then both glanced into each other's eyes, and both smiled. "I'm so sorry to have troubled you," added Miss Ann sweetly.

There was a friendly gleam in her aged gray eyes now that won Sue's heart before the little woman before her, standing with her back to her sitting-room door, had uttered another word.

Sue laid her wet umbrella against the banisters next to Miss Ann's dry one, and brushed the wet from her skirt.

"You are Miss Moulton, aren't you?" she asked with a cheery smile.

"Yes, my child. How did you know? Except for Mr. Crane we know no one here at present. My sister and I live here; we have lived here nearly as long as Mr. Crane."

"I know," nodded Sue. "Moses told me." There was something so gentle, frank, and sincere, especially in the word "child," that Sue already felt they were friends. The frail, gloved hand lingered in Sue's. "You don't know how glad I am to meet you, Miss Moulton," said she, pressing it firmly.

"And I to meet you, my dear. It's such a joy to have a young girl come into this dreadful gloomy place," sighed Miss Ann.

"It *is* gloomy to-day, isn't it?" Sue declared. "If you don't really have to go out I wouldn't, Miss Moulton. It's simply dreadful out. The streets are simply swimming in slush, and it's just that kind of a drizzling rain that soaks you through and through." Sue hesitated. "Do you really have to go out?" she asked seriously. "Please tell me, is there anything I can do? Do let me go if there is. *Must* you go?—and without your rubbers, too! I feel like scolding you," she laughed.

"But, but I was only going to the druggist's," explained Miss Ann. "My sister has been quite wretched and in bed since yesterday with a cold."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Sue. "I hope it isn't serious."

"Of course it's nothing," returned Miss Ann; "but you see, dear, she is not very strong, and I'm always a little anxious about her."

"Now you *must* let me go," pleaded Sue. "You'll be drenched, Miss Moulton. I'm drenched already, so it doesn't matter, I'm used to getting wet."

In reply Miss Ann patted the girl's shoulder affectionately. "I should not think of letting you go, my child. I'll send Moses instead and, unless your dear mother is waiting for you, won't you come in and see me? Mary will take care of your wet things. Then we can have some tea and a good chat before the wood-fire."

"Oh, how nice! Of course I'll come. A wood-fire!" Sue exclaimed, as Miss Ann opened the door of the cosey old-fashioned sitting-room. "It's a long time since I've seen a real wood-fire—not since we lived in Clapham. Don't you love them?"

"Yes, my child; all my life I have loved them. They are like old friends," she added, as she led the young girl across her threshold, whereupon she sent Mary down for Moses, with instructions and a prescription, laid aside Sue's wet things in the kitchen to dry, poked into a blaze the dying embers of the sitting-room fire, put on two fresh logs, ensconced Sue in a big armchair full of eider-down cushions, insisted on relieving her of her shoes and rubbers, tucked her trim stockinged feet upon a low settle before a glorious

hickory blaze, and called to her sister Jane through the half-closed door of her bedroom, announcing their visitor—all as naturally as if Sue had been visiting them for years.

There was a restful, cosey atmosphere about the Misses Moulton's apartment that appealed keenly to the young girl before the cheery fire. She could not help realizing the slovenly air and bad taste of their own belongings; that sordid collection of trash that had always accompanied them in their various movings. Some of these modern horrors had been acquired on the instalment plan, and stood out incongruously among their meagre store of family mahogany. Imitation oak and cherry made no difference to Ebner Ford as long as the drawers worked and there was room enough for his scanty wardrobe. As for her mother, despite her Southern training, she had no taste whatever. A Nile-green bow tied on a nickel-plated picture easel went far from shocking her sense of the artistic. Mrs. Ford had purchased two of them, in fact, one serving to uphold a crayon portrait of Ebner, showing the great promoter wearing his white tie, and laboring under an expression calculated to convey to the mind of the spectator absolute honesty and business acumen; and the other sustaining a gilt wicker basket, filled with dyed pampas grass, and further embellished with silvered sea-shells spelling "Welcome."

And so Sue and the little spinster chatted on, while

the fragrant tea brewed in the daintiest of white porcelain teapots, Miss Jane putting here and there a word in the conversation through the door ajar of her bedroom, an effort which ended in a fit of coughing, a gentle protest from her sister, silence, and a nap.

Miss Ann rose from the tea-table, softly closed the door of Miss Jane's bedroom, and resumed:

"So you see, dear, my sister Jane and I have lived here so long that we have become attached to the old house, gloomy as it is. I don't think I should have the courage to move again among strangers—when I think of all the people we have seen settled here," smiled Miss Ann reminiscently, while she paused to pour a second cup of tea for Sue.

"Oh! please go on," pleaded Sue eagerly, as she recovered her boots, now warm and dry. "Do tell me all about them," she added as she laced them. "Don't you love to study people? They are all so different, you know. You were speaking of Mr. Crane and his top floor when I interrupted you. Do tell me more of the history of the house; it's simply fascinating."

"Well, let me see. Then, there was old Mr. Peapod."

"Peapod!" laughed Sue. "Delicious!"

"Simon Peapod. Such an eccentric, withered-up old man, who used to stutter with embarrassment, I remember, every time we met him on the stairs. Somebody in the house, Mr. Crane says, once invited him (Shy Simon we used to call him) to dinner, and he stole down-stairs, sneaked around a corner to a lamp-

post box, and mailed a regret," chuckled Miss Ann, "although he lived on the floor above them—where the young men are now."

"And so *they* succeeded Mr.—oh, delicious name!—Mr. Peapod?"

"No, my dear, a Miss Green succeeded Mr. Peapod."

"I knew a Miss Anna Green, from New York, a sculptress. She used to come to Clapham to visit an aunt—a tall girl with dark hair. I wonder if it could have been she," Sue ventured.

"No, my child. The Miss Green I speak of was an actress—dear, it isn't a very happy history—she's dead, poor girl."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sue. "And did she die here, poor thing?"

"She died in Bellevue Hospital," said Miss Ann very quietly, and for a moment the little woman ceased speaking. She did not refer to what she herself had meant to the poor girl in question; how time and time again she had stood by this poor inebriate; how she would go out at night and hunt her up in the cafés and restaurants and take her home and put her to bed; how at last she became hopeless and desperately ill, with no one to appeal to save Miss Ann, and then her death in Bellevue, and the funeral which Miss Ann arranged and paid for.

"Tell me—how long have the architects—Mr. Atwater and Mr. Grimsby, I mean—been here?" asked Sue, breaking the silence.

"Well, my dear—let me see—all of six months, I should say."

"You won't think it strange in my asking, will you, Miss Moulton?—but, you see, we had hardly gotten settled before they asked mother and me and Mr. Ford to a musicale in their rooms. My stepfather went, but—well, mother and I declined. It seemed so forced and sudden. Can't you understand, Miss Moulton? I just couldn't."

"I dare say they meant no harm," declared Miss Ann. Then, after a brief reflective pause: "Of course, dear, as you say, it *was* a little sudden. When I was your age, my child, the young men were different than they are nowadays—as for these young fellows, they both seem to be gentlemen and of good family. At least what little I have seen of them leads me to believe so. Mr. Grimsby is always so exceedingly polite."

"Oh! it's easy to be polite," returned Sue hastily. "It isn't that, Miss Moulton. I—I don't believe I can quite explain it to you; I don't believe you'd understand it if I did. I'm foolish, I suppose; and then it's so different in New York—but I just couldn't go the other night. The next day I met Mr. Grimsby on the stairs, I told him I was sorry—I guess he understood—but the very next day he persisted in calling on mother."

"And may I ask what was your dear mother's impression, my dear?"

"Mother didn't see him," confessed Sue without turning her head, her blue eyes gazing at the fire. "Mother told Bridget to tell him she begged to be

excused," she added, turning and flushing slightly. "Mother did not like the idea of his calling, anyway. It seemed so forced; we were hardly settled and perfect strangers, you see."

"And your stepfather—he went, you say, my dear?"

"Yes, Mr. Ford went," replied the young girl nervously, twining and untwining her fingers.

"And did he enjoy himself?" asked the little spinster quietly.

"Mr. Ford always enjoys himself where strangers are concerned," returned Sue, her breath coming quick. Then with a toss of her pretty head: "My—my stepfather and I do not always agree about—well, about lots of things, Miss Moulton." The tears were fast welling into Sue Preston's eyes. Again she gave a brave little toss of her head, brushing the tears away with the back of her hand—her lips quivering.

Miss Ann rose quietly, went over to the young girl, put an arm tenderly about her neck, bent down and kissed her flushed cheek. Sue's small hand crept into hers.

"There! there! you're tired, child," murmured the little old maid affectionately. "Your dear mother will be wondering, I fear, what has become of you."

"I'm—I'm going now," Sue managed to say. "You've been so good and kind to me," she added tensely, her voice none too steady as she left the comfortable old chair and its eider-down cushions, and stood up straight, her hands clasped behind her, her blue eyes gazing gratefully into Miss Ann's.

"And you'll come again, won't you?" ventured the little spinster, "and bring your dear mother."

She summoned Mary for Sue's dry things from the kitchen, and when finally she opened the sitting-room door leading out to the gloomy hallway, Sue lingered for an instant on its threshold. Then impulsively she flung her arms about the little woman's neck, kissed her withered cheek, and flew down the stairs.

CHAPTER VI

The fact that Enoch Crane returned Ebner Ford's call a week later, proved that whatever his opinion might be of his neighbor, he felt in duty bound to return his visit. In matters of this kind Enoch was as punctilious as an ambassador. This man, whom strangers put down as crusty, cold, crabbed, and uncompanionable, could not be accused of being a snob or a boor. It may be further said that he decided to call on Ford purely out of self-respect for himself—in what he conceived to be the well-bred thing to do. He who had been capable of opening his door wide to his unwelcome visitor, had waved him courteously to the comfort of his favorite chair, had listened to his cheap and overfamiliar talk, and had explained to him as politely as he could that he had a pressing engagement, pursued, nevertheless, his code of manners in accordance with what he considered to be his duty as a gentleman under unfortunate obligations of the kind. Enoch might easily have barred his door to Ford forever, and thus have banished the overneighborly promoter and his worthless laundry stock from his mind. The memory of Ford's visit had not altogether ceased to irritate him. There were moments, however, as he chanced to recall it, when his broader mind and higher intelligence saw its humorous side.

One afternoon, as he was sitting smoking a light Havana in the front room of the Manhattan Club—a favorite club of Enoch's, since it was but a short walk from the top floor of Waverly Place—he broke out in a broad grin, and rubbed his stubborn chin.

"What cheek that fellow had!" he exclaimed half aloud. "He's insufferable." Then he began to laugh softly to himself, and as he laughed Ford's calm effrontery seemed all the more amusing.

"I'll go down and call on him to-morrow afternoon," he muttered, and straightway made a note of it in a small, well-thumbed leather memorandum-book, which he invariably carried in his vest pocket, next to his reading-glasses. Had any one chanced to glance into this little book, filled with interesting engagements, they would have read the complete diary of Enoch's daily life. The leaf he had turned to ran as follows:

Thursday : Dinner of the Society of Mechanical Research.
Saturday : Geographical Society.
Friday : Dinner to Commander Nelson.
Saturday : Meeting at Century.
Tuesday : Rear-Admiral Mason to lunch—Daly's—Union Club.
Sunday : Joseph Jefferson's birthday.

Monday afternoon was free, however, and it was here he jotted down "Ford."

At five o'clock Monday, Ebner Ford answered Enoch's knock at his door in his carpet slippers and shirt-sleeves, both of which he apologized for, recovered an alpaca office coat from Mrs. Ford's bedroom closet,

retained the slippers, declared he had just had a nap after a heavy business day, regretted his stepdaughter was out, singing up-town at a tea, and assured his visitor that his better half would be dressed to receive him in just a minute.

"Damn glad to see you," said Ford, straightening his white tie with a nervous wrench in the folding-bed mirror. "Sort of missed you, Crane. Busy, I suppose? Well, we're all busy. The duller business is, the busier I get. Common sense, ain't it? 'Early bird gets the worm,' as the feller said. Come to think of it, most of my big deals in life have come from gittin' up early—gittin' after 'em—gittin' after the other feller before he gits after you." Ford winked his left eyelid at Enoch. "When you've got as many irons in the fire as I have, Crane," he declared, "it don't do to let 'em get cold. Set down, won't you, and make yourself at home."

So far it had not occurred to him to offer his guest a seat.

"Take that there rocker," he said with insistence; "best in the market. Sid Witherall made that rocker. You know the Witherall brothers, I suppose; big lumber people up-State; slapped right into the furniture business as easy as slidin' off a log. That's one of Sid's patents. Spring balance, you see, keeps her rockin'. Sid made a heap of money out of that contrivance. Sells 'em like hot cakes. Just the thing for porch or shady nook, country or seaside, an ornament to the home and a joy to old and young. Well, say

—when it comes to advertisin', Sid's about as cute as they make 'em, regular persuader in print. Though if I do say it, Crane, he'll have to hop along some to beat our latest prospectus of the U. F. L. A., Limited. Cast your eye over *that*, neighbor!" he exclaimed, jerking a circular from a bundle on his roll-top desk, fresh from the printer's. He handed it to Enoch with a triumphant air.

"Thank you," said Enoch quietly, as he accepted the proffered rocker. He put on his reading-glasses, and began to peruse the latest circular of the United Family Laundry Association with grim resignation, Ford, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, waiting in silence for him to finish.

"Pretty neat, ain't it?" he declared, watching Enoch as he read on. "Gets at the customer first crack out of the box with a hearty handshake, inspires confidence at low rates. That there line," he explained, pointing with a long finger to: "Don't damn your shirts if you find they don't fit when they come back from the wash. Damn the laundry. We guarantee no profanity in our work." "That line's mine, Crane."

"I might have guessed so," said Enoch, glancing up at the promoter over the fine gold rims of his spectacles. "You seem to have been born, Mr. Ford, with a—er—what—shall I say?—an inborn talent—to—er—catch the public."

"Been so since I was a boy," declared Ford with enthusiasm. "Always seemed to come natural to me. Why, Crane, I warn't but just turned sixteen when I

was out for myself on the road makin' sometimes as high as a hundred and fifty dollars a week sellin' 'The Elixir of Youth.' Take it along up Lake Champlain and down the Vermont side during fair-time; why, them 'way-backs would crowd up and slap out a dollar for a bottle quick as a trout takes a grasshopper."

"Harmless, I hope?" remarked Enoch.

"Harmless!" Ford grinned and scratched his head. "Well, Crane, I wasn't takin' any chances. A little Epsom salts and brook water, tinctured up with port wine never hurt 'em any, I guess. Then, of course, they had a dollar's worth of excitement in waitin' to get young. Used to throw in a mirror and a pocket-comb with every three-bottle sale."

"A hundred and fifty dollars a week! Ah, you don't tell me!" exclaimed Enoch slowly, squaring about in the rocker and scrutinizing Ford sternly.

"That's what it amounted to, my friend—clean velvet profit—from Monday to Saturday night. Not so bad for a youngster of sixteen, was it? I used to do a lot of talkin' then. I had to."

"Naturally you needed a good rest Sundays," intervened Enoch coldly.

"Oh! Sundays, of course I had to close down the show. But I was pretty light-fingered on the cornet in those days, and when I struck a fresh town Sundays I used to lead the church choir. Nothing like a cornet to fill a meetin'-house. That always netted me a five-dollar note. I tell daughter she must have somehow inherited her musical talent from me."

"Inherited?" remarked Enoch dryly.

"Well, of course, not exactly—inherited—I being her stepfather; but anyway," he laughed, "music runs in the family. Take Mrs. Ford, for instance, never took a lesson in her life, but she certainly can play the piano."

"Now, Ebner," protested a voice behind Enoch's chair.

Mrs. Ford, red from dressing, heralded by the faint rustle of a new lavender-silk dress, and a strong odor of violet perfume, swept effusively into the room.

"Well, Mr. Crane!" exclaimed that round little woman. (Mrs. Ford was really round all over. There were no angles.) "You don't know how overjoyed we are to see you; how simply delighted!"

"My wife, Crane," Ford endeavored to explain. She put forth a plump hand to Enoch as he rose from the rocker. "Ebner has so often spoken of you," she burst out.

"Delighted to meet you, madam," said Enoch. "I regret not having the double pleasure of seeing your daughter. Your husband tells me Miss Preston is out singing at a musicale."

"At a tea, Mr. Crane," declared Mrs. Ford, her small mouth pinched in a set smile. "At the Van Cortlandt's. I tell Sue she's getting on famously; of course you know the Van Cortlandts—as if there was any one in New York who didn't. Of course you saw about their niece's superb wedding in the papers the other day. Magnificent affair, wasn't it?"

"Evidently it escaped me," confessed Enoch.

"Why, Mr. Crane, the papers were full of it! As I tell Sue, when you do go into society, go into the best."

"You are right, madam," returned Enoch. "There is nothing rarer than good society; the best is none too good. It is more often shockingly bad."

"But of course the Van Cortlandts, Mr. Crane. Their wealth and position——"

Enoch did not reply.

"Sue says their house on Fifth Avenue is a palace of luxury!" exclaimed her mother.

"Window-curtains alone cost forty thousand dollars, they claim," put in Ford over Enoch's shoulder.

"Well," sighed the little woman, "when you have millions—do be seated, won't you? I've disturbed you, I fear. Don't fib—I have, haven't I?—just as you were having a good old chat with Ebner. Ah, you men, when you get together! Of course you can tell I'm a Southerner, can't you, Mr. Crane? They say we old families from North Carolina never quite lose our accent. Sue was speaking about it at the Van Cortlandts only the other day."

"Worth about three millions, ain't he?" interrupted Ford.

"Who—Sam Van Cortlandt?" inquired Enoch, turning sharply to him as Mrs. Ford subsided on the sofa, and began to smooth out the wrinkles in her new lavender-silk dress with an air of a duchess trying to decide whether or not she should give it to the poor.

"Wasn't it him that made that big corner in cotton about ten years ago?" asked the promoter.

"Yes," said Enoch. "That was Sam Van Cortlandt."

"Biggest thing ever done, wa'n't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Ford, in the way of unprincipled scoundrelism it *was*," declared Enoch with some heat. "Piracy on the high seas of finance. Piracy, pure and simple," he declared, his stern voice rising savagely.

"Why, Mr. Crane, you surprise me!" exclaimed Mrs. Ford.

"Piracy, madam; there's no other word for it."

"Um!" exclaimed Ford. "You call a man a pirate and a scoundrel, because he's successful—because he's got grit, and nerve, and brains enough to carry a deal through that made him, if I recollect it right, over a million dollars in a single day?"

"I do," snapped Enoch, "when that million means the financial ruin of hundreds of honest families. Sam Van Cortlandt ruined them by the wholesale. He ruined them from New Orleans to San Francisco," he cried hotly. "Many of them have never recovered."

Mrs. Ford raised her thin eyebrows to the speaker in silent astonishment.

"Six months later," continued Enoch brusquely, squaring himself before the fireless grate, his hands clenched behind him, "Van Cortlandt again held his grip on the cotton market. Those who had managed to escape the first crash, went down under the second.

A few came out limping, but he got most of them in the end—more than one he drove to suicide. Then they thought of running him for governor. Instead, the Supreme Court ran him uncomfortably close to the penitentiary for complicity in bribery relative to his mining territory in Montana. You have asked me about Sam Van Cortlandt. Very well; I have told you."

He shut his square jaws hard, and gazed for some seconds at the pattern in the faded carpet.

Mrs. Ford did not utter a syllable; she sat immovable on the sofa, redder under the shock of Enoch's tirade, though none too willing to believe it. The Van Cortlandt's millions and social position, their niceness to her daughter, and the glamour of her being welcomed to their exclusive society serving only too readily as a balm to heal the gaping wound left by Enoch's words.

Enoch had slashed deep; he had bared the truth about Sam Van Cortlandt down to the bone.

The promoter looked up and cleared his throat.

"Ain't you exaggerating a little, friend?" he ventured blandly.

"Exaggerating!" Enoch jerked up his square jaws, and protruded his under lip, a gesture peculiar to him when he was roused. He focussed a kindling eye on his questioner: "Do you suppose, sir, I do not know what I am talking about? I am not given to making statements which have no foundation."

"But all that which you speak of, Mr. Crane, is—

is happily in the past," remarked Mrs. Ford sweetly, endeavoring to soften the awkward pause that followed. "As I tell Ebner, we should always be ready to forgive others their—their little mistakes. Oh! I believe strongly in forgiveness, Mr. Crane—'deed I do. I'm just that way, Mr. Crane, and always have been, since I was a girl—my old North Carolinian blood, I suppose—" Her monotonous, high-keyed voice softened as she spoke, and Enoch caught plainly now her Southern accent, touched slightly with the lazy cadence of the negro, as she continued to dilate upon the beauty and virtues of Mrs. Van Cortlandt and the lavish generosity of her husband.

"What's past is past," was Ford's profound remark, when she had finished. "He got his money, anyway. If he'd laid down and give up, somebody else 'ed trampled over him—done the trick, and got it—wouldn't they? I'll bet you a thousand dollars even they would have." (Ford's bets were never lower than a thousand.) "I guess when you sift the whole thing down, friend, you'll find Sam Van Cortlandt was up against a pretty big proposition. It was win out or die."

Enoch lifted a face that quivered with sudden rage, but he did not open his lips.

"Hark!" said Mrs. Ford excitedly, as she caught the sound of a quick, familiar step on the stairs. "That's Sue now," and she rushed to open the door. She confided to Sue in an excited whisper as she tripped up to the landing that Mr. Crane was there; saw for herself that her daughter was trim and unruffled,

smoothed a wisp of her fair hair in place, and ushered her into the sitting-room, beaming with motherly pride.

There was a refreshing cheerfulness about the young girl as she entered that sent the hard lines out of Enoch's face before her mother had presented her. As he looked up critically at the girl before him, her charm and refinement were evident to him before she had even opened her pretty lips or stretched forth her shapely gloved hand, which she did with so much unassuming frankness that Enoch held it gratefully. Her cheeks were rosier than usual to-day. Evidently she had thoroughly enjoyed herself at the tea. There was a certain radiance and sparkle in her blue eyes, as she tossed her roll of music on the little Chippendale table and hastily drew off her gloves, that captivated him. He had already banished Van Cortlandt's failings from his mind. It seemed incredible to him as he watched her, that she was really part of the household in which, for the last quarter of an hour, he had listened to the ill-disguised social aspirations of her mother and the crude, mercenary view-point of her stepfather. The sight of Sue warmed his heart; again his keen eyes kindled, this time with satisfaction.

"Your mother tells me you have been singing at a tea," said Enoch in a kindly tone, as he released her hand. "I had no idea you were so gifted, my dear," he continued pleasantly. "And you made a success? I'm sure of it."

Sue flushed under the compliment.

"I did my best, Mr. Crane," she confessed simply, with a forced little laugh.

"The Van Cortlandts have asked her to sing again next week," declared her mother triumphantly.

"Well, say, girlie! that looks like success, don't it?" broke in Ebner Ford. "Made a hit, did you?"

He slammed down the top of the roll-top desk, and locked it. Sue glanced at him with a pained expression.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Ford, it will be a good many years before I can really make a success," she said evenly. Then turning to Enoch seriously: "I'm only a beginner, you know, Mr. Crane."

"Of course you are," he returned, "but there is a beginning to all art, a hard beginning, and you are beginning bravely, my dear. There is no short cut leading to art. It is a rough and stony road—mostly up-hill and very little down-dale, and for the most of its length hedged with thorns, masking so many pitfalls that many give up, faint and disheartened by the wayside, long before they reach the broad plateau of success at the top, and can stand there looking down over the valley of shadows and trials they have struggled up through safely."

Sue caught her breath and looked at Enoch with her blue eyes wide open with eager interest. "Oh, how wonderful!" she cried. "Do go on."

"I am not saying this to discourage you, my dear," he continued, "but to encourage you. You are so young, so rich in years to come—years that we old

fellows no longer have. Do your best; sing on to the best of your ability. In every fresh effort, in every new note lies the real lesson. Think of how happy you will be when at last you are sure of yourself, sure in making others feel what you feel. In painting, in sculpture, and in literature it is the same, and in no art is this rare ability of making others feel what you interpret so rare as in music. Music without it is simply a display of pretty noises. Only the artist can touch the heart." The ugly little room was silent as he ceased speaking. Sue's eyes were shining.

"And you were not frightened?" asked Enoch.

"Yes, Mr. Crane," declared Sue frankly, "I was. I was just scared to death before all those people. New York is so critical, you know. They have a way of looking at you when you begin as if they had made up their minds to be bored. Think of it, mother, the ball-room was packed—the conservatory, too. Mrs. Van Cortlandt, you remember, said she had only asked a few intimate friends to drop in for a cup of tea."

"Gorgeous affair, of course," declared the mother solemnly. "I expected it would be, honey. The Van Cortlandts always entertain so extravagantly. Well—" she sighed deeply—"when one has millions, Mr. Crane! Tell me, did Miss Stimpson play your accompaniments? I worried so, fearing she would disappoint you at the last moment; you know, honey, how uncertain she is."

At which Sue declared that that near-sighted and nervous girl, Mazie Stimpson, had sent word at the

last moment that it was impossible for her to be there, owing to a distressing attack of sore throat.

"How outrageous of her!" exclaimed the mother. "No wonder, darling, you were nervous."

"Pity you didn't go along with her, Emma," ventured Ford meekly; "been just the thing."

"I certainly now wish I had," declared Mrs. Ford firmly. "Sue is so dependent on a good accompanist, Mr. Crane."

"Ah, but I found one, mother," announced Sue, with so much satisfaction that Enoch pricked up his ears. "Who do you think came to my rescue? A Mr. Lamont. He plays exquisitely. Wasn't it kind of him?"

"Mr. Lamont!" exclaimed the mother. "Not Mr. Jack Lamont?" she asked, beaming with interest.

Sue nodded. "Yes, mother—Mr. Jack Lamont. He's simply marvellous. He gives one so much confidence when he's at the piano. He's so wonderfully clever in his phrasing, and never rushes you. I came home with him, mother. He insisted on taking me home in his brougham." This time Enoch caught his breath. "I begged him to come up, but he had to go back for Mrs. Lamont. He told me such a lot of interesting things—about his polo-ponies and his yacht, and his cottage at Newport. The Van Cortlandts adore him."

"How delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Ford. "You, of course, have heard of Mr. Lamont," she said, turning to Enoch. "'Handsome Jack Lamont,' they call him.

He's such a lion in society. They say no cotillon can be a success without him. You see his name everywhere."

Enoch's jaw closed with a grip; when it relaxed he confessed bluntly that he had not only heard about Mr. Lamont, but had seen him. That he was, in fact, a member of one of his clubs, where Mr. Lamont was not only to be seen, but heard. He did not add "drunk or sober." Neither did he dilate upon the various escapades of that gentleman, or the strained relations that had existed during several reckless conspicuous years between Mrs. Lamont and her society-pampered husband, or that his polo-ponies were fed and cared for, his steam-yacht run, and the luxuries of his Newport cottage paid for out of Mrs. Lamont's check-book—Jack Lamont's favorite volume, the stubs of whose pages bore evidence of Mrs. Lamont's resigned generosity in matters that did not concern the public. Instead, Enoch held his tongue and started to take his leave, having left in Sue Preston's heart a certain friendly reverence. In Enoch, in his charm of manner, in his kindly outspoken sincerity, she saw those qualities so sadly lacking in her stepfather. Enoch was real. She already felt a strange confidence in him. From the little she had heard about him as their neighbor—a reputation of being brusque and ill-natured—she saw only too plainly now that it was a mask, back of which lay a personality, full of so much charm and kindliness, of insight and understanding, of that great gentleness which is part of

every great gentleman, that she felt she might come to him gladly for advice as a daughter might come to a father. Had he not already encouraged her? and so eloquently and graciously that she could have listened to him for hours.

In the brief conversation that ensued as he neared the door to take his leave, Ebner Ford referred again to the hospitality of the young architects on the third floor, a tactless speech which Mrs. Ford received frigidly, and which forced Sue to confess guardedly:

"Strange—wasn't it, mother?—Mr. Grimsby was at the Van Cortlandts'."

"At the *Van Cortlandts'!* I trust it was by invitation," returned her mother stiffly, recovering from her astonishment. "Nothing would surprise me in regard to that young man's ability to force himself anywhere. Imagine, Mr. Crane—we were hardly——"

"But, mother, I only saw him for an instant, just as Mr. Lamont and I were leaving," explained Sue. "He told me he had known the Van Cortlandts for years."

"A most excellent young fellow," declared Enoch briskly. "A most charming young fellow," he insisted. "We are sadly in need of young men of his good taste and ability, when you consider, Mrs. Ford, how poverty-stricken in style our architecture has become. How many horrors in brownstone we are obliged to look at and live in. Atrocious jumbles, beastly attempts at Ionic and Corinthian—ugly, misshapen, and badly conceived—nightmares, madam, in

stone—scarcely a detail that does not offend the eyes. Roman, French, Renaissance, and Tudor stewed together, capped by mansard roofs, and decorated with vagaries from the fret-saw, the lathe, and the cold chisel in the hands of bumpkins—we are sadly in need of a revolution in all this. New York is growing; it will be a beautiful city some day, but it will take many years to make it so. Young men like Mr. Grimsby and his colleague, Mr. Atwater, I tell you are worth their weight in gold." And with that he took his leave, not, however, without the consciousness as he did so of a pair of blue eyes smiling into his own.

"Jack Lamont!" he muttered to himself, as he climbed the stairs to his rooms to dress for dinner at the club. "And he brought that child home in his brougham? Merciful Heaven!"

CHAPTER VII

The ever-watchful eye of the liveried servant in charge of the door of the club, whose duty it was to recognize a member from a visitor and receive him accordingly past that exclusive threshold, swung open the door to Mr. Enoch Crane to-night with a bow and a respectful smile of greeting.

"Good evening, James," said Enoch pleasantly.

"Good evening, Mr. Crane," returned the domestic; "a bad night, sir."

A page ran up to relieve Enoch of his dripping umbrella, but it was James himself who divested him of his overcoat and white muffler, relieved him as well of his rain-bespattered silk hat, several seasons out of date (Enoch had a horror of new fashions), and having handed them to the page who hurried away with them to the coat-room, knelt down on the marble floor, Enoch steadying himself with one hand on the man's broad shoulder, while he unbuckled and took off his galoshes.

"I've got it for you here, sir," said James, lowering his voice and glancing furtively around him. Then as a trio of members crossed the hall close to his heels, he added: "A note for you, Mr. Crane," and he rose and handed Enoch an unsealed white envelope, stamped with the club's name, and unaddressed.

"Thank you, James," said Enoch, and left him to his vigil again at the door.

Enoch never forgot to speak to James when he entered. He also bid him a pleasant good night when he left. In fact, it may be said that out of all the members of that stately and time-honored establishment, Enoch was the only one who invariably bid James good evening and good night. Certainly it never occurred to that faultlessly dressed member, Mr. Morton Beresford, to do so—Beresford in his smart London clothes, who knew Europe and talked it, a valuable man at dinner, and a great favorite with the newly elected "money-having" men. Beresford considered those who served him as objects of utility, like the great, soft rugs beneath his feet, or the bell for a fresh cocktail under his big, ringed hand. Neither was Jack Lamont given to these little touches of human kindness, which often mean more to those who serve than tips. His conduct to inferiors was generally overbearing. When he was obliged to ring twice, Lamont swore. So did Seth Van Worden, grain-broker, when the slightest thing disturbed him. Van Worden was proud of his ancestry, having walked one day over a graveyard in Rotterdam and found a de Worden buried there. From that moment Seth began to search among the branches of his family tree for some distinguished fruit. Finally, at the tip end of a forgotten limb, he discovered a certain Van Worden—an admiral. His joy was intense. It left no doubt in his mind that he himself was of straight descent from

that famous personage, and within twenty-four hours the Van Worden coat-of-arms was conspicuous in gilt upon his note-paper, Mrs. Van Worden adding a few flourishes to her taste which the blazon lacked, while Seth became absorbed in making a collection of early Dutch prints for his library—mostly sea-fights, in which the distinguished admiral could be gloriously detected in the smoke. Seth, however, Enoch knew, was pure New England, Van Worden meaning "from Worden," a Holland town. His ancestors being part of a shipload bound for Salem, all of them were known when they landed as "Van Wordens," and most of them being suspicious characters, were glad to lose their identity in Van Worden.

As for that ponderous and florid member, Mr. Samuel Barker, who made his money in glue, and whose truffles, wines, and cigars, were all especially selected for him, only the most capable of club servants could attend to his wants speedily enough to save that gentleman from growing purple with rage.

There were others, too, whose bald heads showed above the window-sills of the big, luxurious room looking out upon Fifth Avenue, and whose habit it was to fill its easy armchairs on fine afternoons and themselves with idle opinions of the public who strolled by them. Enoch knew them all.

Some of the younger members referred to Enoch as "old Crane," and gave him a wide berth, as being sour, opinioned, and crabbed. They did not forget, however, that he was a member of the advisory com-

mittee, and as such they feared more than respected his authority, though they openly discussed the failings of the house committee down to the question of soap and nail-files, and up to the size of the cocktail glasses, and the quality of the gin. Others assumed that critical air of connoisseurs, who, having been weaned on commonplace nourishment during their early struggles to make a living, were more difficult to please in good fortune than Lucullus in the matter of canvasback ducks, terrapin, and grilled mushrooms. Many of them having reached manhood on cider and elderberry wine, now considered themselves experts in dry champagne, sound red burgundy, and their proper temperatures. Some became both illustrious and conspicuous by inventing concoctions of their own, like little Archie Reynolds, whose long drink known as a "Reynolds pick-me-up," survived two seasons of popularity, and finally fell flat, to give place to an invention of the barman, whose full name nobody cared about.

As for the elder men, there were many who were glad to meet Enoch, men of distinction and brains, whom New York honored among her citizens in commerce, in law, and in science, in surgery, and in medicine—men whom it was a liberal education to meet, and whose modesty was one of their many virtues.

There were half a dozen other clubs in which Enoch might have chosen to dine to-night, but he chose this one—a club which he rarely went to for dinner.

He glanced into the big front room where the shades

were drawn back of the heavy velveteen curtains, noted the identity of the men there chatting in groups or screened behind the evening papers, and having assured himself that the man he was looking for was not among them, searched through the silent library and the card-rooms, and without further investigation made his way to the dining-room, where he chose a small table in the corner, commanding a view of the door. A score of dinners were already in progress. Among these he recognized several acquaintances, Morton Beresford and Sam Barker being among them. These he nodded to in passing, and took his seat at the table he had chosen, where he ordered a most excellent little dinner, beginning with a dry Chablis and oysters, and continuing with a bottle of Château de Bécheville, stuffed green peppers, and a salad of cold, firm, sliced tomatoes, which he insisted on dressing himself. He was dressing this salad when the tall, slim figure of a middle-aged man silhouetted in the doorway made him lay aside his spoon and salad-fork and watch the newcomer intently as he scanned the dining-room with his black eyes, caught sight of Seth Van Worden dining alone, and went over and joined him.

There was no mistaking that tall, slim figure, the iron-gray hair shading to silver at the temples, the clean-cut, handsome profile, or that easy manner of a man of the world with which he crossed the dining-room.

Enoch saw Seth Van Worden rise briskly from his

chair and stretch out his hand to welcome him. Then the late comer took his seat at Van Worden's table and unfolded his napkin, with his back to Enoch, who resumed his salad dressing with the grim satisfaction a detective feels in having guessed where to find his man, and found him.

It was Jack Lamont.

Enoch was in no hurry. He raised his eyes to a waiter and quietly asked the man to bring him a copy of the *Sun*, which he refolded by his plate and perused leisurely over his salad, while Lamont, with his back to him, bent over his green-turtle soup, and a waiter poured for him a stiff glass of Bourbon whiskey and soda. Now and then Enoch caught fragments of their conversation, Seth Van Worden's big voice reaching clearly to his table. Lamont's was pitched lower and accompanied by a good deal of foreign gesture, which had become a habit with him since his various sojourns abroad, more often in Paris than elsewhere, though he knew that gay little Paris—Brussels—as well as his pocket, and Italy—at least that side of it which appealed to Jack; Florence in the height of the season, and Venice, when a favorite little countess he knew was there to welcome him in her palace so close to the Grand Canal, that you could have thrown a kiss to it in passing. Seth's eyes brightened as he drank his wine and devoured a slice of cold duck cooked to his liking. Seth was again on his favorite topic of conversation—the Dutch—and his descent from that brave, stolid little nation. He dilated as usual upon

their centuries of prowess on the high seas, their honesty, their ancient blood. Seth, being overblooded by high living, had his full share of it. Presently he launched forth to Lamont, about the Hollanders' love of flowers, raking up from his shallow knowledge the threadbare history of the black tulip. He informed Lamont that he had picked up two rare volumes on tulip-growing, printed by hand in Rotterdam in 1600, and paid "a sound price for them, by gad," for which he was not sorry, and had them now safe under a special glass case in his library.

"I knew a Dutch girl once," intervened Lamont, and he bent over to confide her qualities to Seth out of hearing of the servants. "Titian hair and a skin like ivory"—Enoch overhead him declare.

Thus the best part of an hour passed. Both were speaking freely now, off their guard, the dining-room being nearly deserted.

"Weren't—you—er—afraid he'd return?" asked Seth.

Lamont's easy, well-modulated laugh filtered through the room.

"You don't suppose I was fool enough not to have calculated that," he returned. "It was a good eight hours from Milan by train—and besides there was old Cesare, my gondolier, and the little *femme de chambre* Annina to give me warning."

"Good-looking?" ventured Seth.

"Who—Annina? As pretty a little Venetian as ever paid you a smile for a compliment. I was playing

for high stakes, I'll admit, old man. But then I knew what I was about—the countess was no fool."

Again Lamont lapsed into *sotto voce.*

"Besides," he declared (again within ear-shot of Enoch), "they manage these little affairs better in Italy than in America. To love is an art there. Very well, they have brought it to a *finesse.* I'd give ten years of my life to be back there again— Ah! but we were happy! Once I wired her all the way from Verona."

Again the conversation became inaudible to Enoch.

"And she came?" asked Seth, his voice rising, with a sneaking thought in his mind that he would like to have known her.

"Of course she did; she even brought Annina. There are some women who never can travel without a maid; the Countess Vezzitti was one. She arrived in deep mourning without a jewel. Delicious, wasn't it? As she whispered to me: 'You see, *amico mio,* I have only brought one jewel—Annina.' I believe that girl would have given her life for her mistress."

He lowered the candle under its crimson shade between them, and kindled a Russian cigarette over its flame, lighting up his dark, handsome, devil-may-care face and a cabochon emerald ring the countess had given him. Lamont might easily have been mistaken for an Italian. His slim, straight figure, over six feet in height, moved with an easy Latin grace; a dark-skinned, handsome fellow, with the eyes of a Neapolitan, fine hands, a soft persuasion in his voice, and a

smile that revealed his perfect teeth, white as milk. At thirty he was all some women could have desired. He was now forty-three.

"Never run after a woman," Lamont resumed quietly. "Take the advice of an old hand, Van Worden, let them run after you; grande dame or bourgeoise, they are all alike."

Then they fell into a talk about the theatres, in which Seth gave vent to some heavy opinions about the revival of the "School for Scandal," at Wallack's, expatiating upon the art and beauty of Miss Annie Robe, and the consummate acting of John Gilbert as Sir Peter Teazle, which he considered a capital performance.

In lighter vein, he talked over the good old theatre days of the past—Harrigan and Hart in their old theatre, the little Comique, playing the "Mulligan Guards Ball," the drop-curtain with a picture of the *Mary Powell* at full speed up the Hudson, and a strong smell of chloride of lime permeating the house from gallery to pit. Thus he preambled reminiscently up the Broadway of his younger days. Where was Niblo's Garden and the "Black Crook"? "Gone," declared Seth. "Evangeline" and "Babes in the Woods" at the old 14th Street Theatre had vanished likewise, and the San Francisco Minstrels, packed on Saturday afternoons with Wall Street brokers, roaring over the personal jokes, those never-to-be-forgotten end-men, Billy Birch and Charley Backus, had prepared for them overnight.

"All gone," sighed Seth.

At which Lamont, who had been more familiar with the 23d Street Koster & Bial's, confided to Seth how many corks he himself had added to the ceiling and walls of its famous cork-room back of the scenes.

Enoch swallowed his salad slowly, his ears on the *qui vive,* his countenance both grim and attentive, and his whole mind on the man with his back to him, who, if he had seen him on entering, had totally forgotten his existence during dinner. Thus another quarter of an hour slipped by, during which Enoch ordered a long cigar and some black coffee. It was not often he dined alone so lavishly, but whatever it cost him to-night, he was determined to sit Lamont out. In his search for him in the club before dinner he had made up his mind to speak to him privately the instant he sighted him. He had ended in listening. That which rankled deep in his heart did not concern Van Worden. He intended to see Lamont *alone.* If Lamont had a grain of decency in him, he felt he would understand.

"If he doesn't understand," he muttered to himself, as he sipped his coffee, "I'll make him. I'll explain to him, that his method of winning the confidence of a young girl scarcely out of her teens is nothing short of damnable; that it's got to stop."

"Where?" asked Van Worden a moment later, rousing himself and stretching his long, angular body back in his chair, as the two reached their cigars and liqueurs.

"At the Van Cortlandts'," confided Lamont.

"The devil you say!"

"Telling you the truth, Seth. At one of her deadly musicales. Dearest little piece of flesh and blood you ever laid eyes on—intelligent, too, frightened out of her wits, but I soon attended to that—got her laughing, and played her accompaniments, Tosti's 'Good-by,' and 'I Awake from Dreams of Thee,' and all that sort of stuff. Chuck full of sentimentality, with a pair of blue eyes that would keep you awake."

"How'd she sing?" put in Van Worden.

The shoulders of Lamont's well-fitting dress coat lifted in a careless shrug.

"Er—not badly—rather surprised me, in fact, after all the squawkers one hears during a winter; not so badly by any means; a damned nice little voice, not badly pitched either, for her age—what we call in Paris a 'petite voix.' She's only a kid, you know, in the rosebud stage. Lives with her mother and stepfather down in one of those gloomy old houses in Waverly Place. Drove her home. She's got the prettiest little feet in the world, old man. I tell you as we fellows get older, we begin to prick up our ears over something that is fresh and young; bright and cheery, with a skin like a rose. They're the best, after all. Why shouldn't they be? Our hearts never grow old, when we're young we're timid and difficult, and by the time we do get some worldly knowledge, the gray hairs begin to hit us, and we go tagging around

after a lot of passéd widows, and divorcées, who know as much as we do."

"And sometimes more," grunted the grain-broker.

"And sometimes more," reiterated Lamont, laughing outright.

Enoch clenched down his napkin, and rose quivering. He drew a sharp breath, and strode over to the table where the two men were seated. His eyes fastened savagely upon Lamont, his under lip shot forward, the muscles of his jaw working convulsively, in an effort to command his voice.

"Hello, Crane!" exclaimed Van Worden, who, facing him, was the first to notice his approach. He might as well have addressed a bull about to charge, for he got no reply, and for an instant stared blankly up at him, wondering what was the matter.

Lamont wheeled round in his chair.

"Hello, Crane!" said he. "You here?" Then noticing the state he was in, rose to his feet.

"You're not ill?" he ventured, with a rapid apprehensive glance at Van Worden, who had risen, his mouth open in astonishment.

"Mr. Lamont," said Enoch evenly, despite the rage that shook him, "I have something to say to you. Something of the utmost importance, sir—*that's* why I'm here."

Lamont instinctively started back, like a man on his guard. Then he covered the speaker with his attractive black eyes half closed, a condescending smile playing about his lips.

"Well?" said he. "Out with it, Crane; what's it all about?"

"*You*," said Enoch grimly.

Lamont's smile broadened under his trim, gray mustache.

"Must be devilish important for you to get into the state you're in," he laughed, with a wink to Van Worden that suggested Enoch was drunk.

Enoch's eyes blazed.

"I'll have you know, sir," he declared tensely, "that it was important enough to bring me here. I'll have you know, sir, that I came here to-night with the express purpose of seeing you"—he turned to Van Worden—"over a matter which does not concern you, Mr. Van Worden. I wish to express to you personally my apology for disturbing you."

"Oh! well—er—that's all right," stammered Van Worden. "Of course if you want to see Lamont in private——"

"In private!" cried Lamont, his black eyes flashing. "What the devil have *you* got to tell me in private, I'd like to know? I decline to be bullied by you, sir, into anything like a conversation in private. No conversations in private for me with a man in your state of mind, thank you, without the presence of a witness. Your age, Crane, prevents me from saying more. What right have you got to disturb us, I'd like to know? Here we are, two gentlemen—dining alone, at the club, and you have the arrogance, the impudence to disturb our dinner!—to make a scene! You

are extraordinary," he cried with a forced laugh. "Conversation in private—eh? I'll be damned if I will. What have you got to say, anyway?"

"This," said Enoch, with slow determination, "that I warn you now, Lamont, it will be to your advantage to grant me an interview, now, at once, over there in the card-room, if you please."

"Not without Seth," retorted Lamont, reddening sullenly under Enoch's dogged insistence. "If that's a go, say so. If not, you can go to—" The oath did not escape him—something in the elder man's eyes arrested it.

"Will you grant me an interview, as I desire it, or not?" Enoch demanded.

"Not without Seth," repeated Lamont stubbornly. He wrenched back his chair and sat down, followed by Seth Van Worden, who slipped into his own.

Though he had scarcely put in a word in an affair which Enoch Crane had assured him he was no part of, but which was rapidly turning from bad to worse, it, nevertheless, made him frightened and so ill at ease that he wished he was anywhere else but where he was. Seth had a horror of scenes, and the scene before him was verging dangerously near a club scandal. There was Mrs. Van Worden to think of. If his name was mentioned with it he knew what to expect from his wife, who was as proud of the name of Van Worden as she was of her solitaire earrings, or her box at the opera, in which she dozed twice weekly during the season.

"*Without* Mr. Van Worden," Enoch continued to demand sternly.

"I'll be damned if I will!" snapped Lamont, reaching out for the decanter of Bourbon and shakily spilling out for himself a stiff drink.

"You are a member of this club, sir," declared Enoch. "I, as you may know, am a member of its advisory committee." Lamont turned sharply.

"Well," said he, with a careless shrug, "what of it?"

"On December 14," continued Enoch, "you were over a month in arrears for house charges, amounting to one hundred and forty-two dollars. On December 15 you paid the amount without being posted, a delay having been granted you."

Again Lamont turned. This time he faced him, silent and anxious.

"On the evening of December 14," continued Enoch, "you were one of four members—Mr. Blake, Mr. Archie Reynolds, Mr. Raymond Crawford, and yourself—in a game of poker that lasted half the night." Enoch planted his strong hands on the table. "Late play in this club is forbidden," he declared. "Play of that kind especially. That night you won close to four hundred dollars."

"Well, I won it, didn't I?" snarled Lamont. "And I paid my house charges, too, didn't I? What more do you want? See here, Crane——"

"You will wait, Lamont, until I have finished," returned Enoch firmly. "The incident of the poker

game might have been closed, had you not left these in your trail." Lamont started, a peculiar expression in his eyes. "*These*," repeated Enoch. He reached in his coat pocket and drew out the white envelope James had given him. It contained three cards—the ace of clubs, the ace of hearts, and the ace of diamonds. "Look at them carefully, Lamont," said he. "You no doubt recognize the pin scratches in the corners."

"You lie!" cried Lamont, springing to his feet, his fists clenched, Van Worden staring at him in amazement.

"I might have expected that," said Enoch, bending closer to him, and lowering his voice. "If you attempt to strike me, Lamont, I warn you you will find I am a stronger man than you imagine. What I say to you is the truth, and you know it." Lamont noticed the size of his hands, the stocky breadth of his shoulders. "These cards are yours, marked by you," continued Enoch. "James, who put you into a cab at daylight that morning, saw them slip out of your pocket—you were drunk—as he propped you back in the seat; he picked them up from the cab floor, discovered they were marked—came to me as a member of the advisory committee, in confidence, and gave me these in evidence."

Lamont gripped the back of his chair to steady himself, the color had left his face, and the corners of his mouth twitched.

"You will either grant me an interview as I wish it, or I will lay the whole matter before the committee,"

continued Enoch. "And now listen to me carefully. If ever I hear of you touching a card again in this club I'll have you expelled." And with this he picked up the empty envelope and the three telltale aces at a grasp, and shoved them back in his pocket before Lamont could prevent him. "You have asked for a witness; very well; Mr. Van Worden will bear testimony to what I have told you."

"Guess you've no further need of me," said Van Worden, who rose and left the dining-room, shaking his head. At the door he said to a sleepy waiter, "Split that dinner," and rang for the elevator.

"Now that we are alone," said Enoch, to the man whose honor lay in his hands, and who for a long moment stood staring at his empty glass, "I wish to tell you plainly, that I consider your attentions to Miss Preston a damnable outrage."

"Preston? — Preston?— What Miss Preston?" stammered Lamont evasively.

"Don't lie to me," growled Enoch. "I wouldn't pursue it, Lamont. It might be dangerous. I overheard nearly your entire conversation at dinner. You played her accompaniments at the Van Cortlandts'; you had the—you, a man of your record among women—had the insolence to bring that child home alone in your brougham. You left her, fortunately, at her mother's door—my neighbor—we live under the same roof."

"What do you mean?" returned Lamont thickly. "You don't think I——"

"Had I a daughter," declared Enoch, "I would not trust her in your hands. *That's* what I think, and that's what I came here to tell you to-night. You leave that child alone." He shot out his under lip. "We manage these little affairs in America better than in Italy," he cried, slamming his clenched fist down on the table, and, without another word, turned on his heel and strode out of the dining-room.

CHAPTER VIII

Rose Van Cortlandt was in her element. She had been spending her husband's money indefatigably these last few days over the final preparations for her second musicale, which five hundred engraved invitations by Tiffany announced for the evening of February 3, at nine o'clock.

People as rich as the Van Cortlandts receive few regrets. The postman's earliest whistle at the area gate of their mansion on Park Avenue this morning heralded his bag stuffed with acceptances in various hued and monogramed envelopes, which he was glad to unload to the second man, who handed them above stairs to the butler, who in turn shovelled them over to the French maid, Marie, who spilled them off the dainty breakfast tray and half-way down the palatial staircase of polished walnut and ebony, on her way to her mistress's bedroom.

None of Rose Van Cortlandt's women friends knew her as well as her maid. Marie had served her for eight years. There was no illusion left to Marie about this dark, slender woman, whom Sam Van Cortlandt spoiled, and whom half of New York society raved about—chattering over her beauty, her gowns, her superb figure, her neck, her arms, her shoulders, her

jewels, her *savoir-faire,* the brilliancy of her dark eyes, the poise with which she carried her small head proudly, her smile, the clever way she managed Sam, the exquisite curve of her throat and neck, her shapely ears, her nervous, small hands, the pink nails polished like sea-shells—nothing escaped them. Marie knew more.

She knew Rose Van Cortlandt at close range; in illness and in health; knew her adorned and unadorned, gay or sad, peevish, petulant, and insolent, in a rage, or in tears; had cared for and handled all her clothes, all her jewels, her hands, her hair; had listened and survived through innumerable scenes—some with the servants, some with her husband; had often amused herself in divining the real reason of her mistress's various moods, and, when in doubt, had carefully reread her letters.

That which others raved about, failed to fascinate Marie. Deep down in her Norman heart she pitied "monsieur." He seemed to her like a *bon garçon,* the best of whose good nature had been trampled upon and stifled out of him by madame, and the weight and responsibility of several million American dollars. Had she had the control of monsieur and his money, she confided to herself, she would have saved them both. She would have intrusted Sam Van Cortlandt's money safely to the Bank of France and not had it kicking around Wall Street, where the risk of losing it was as great as at roulette or baccarat. Neither would monsieur live in such an insane asylum as she served in—*Ah! non, mon Dieu!*—where every one quarrelled, from

her masters all the way down to the furnaceman and the second parlor-maid. She would see that monsieur had a comfortable apartment in Paris, and a modest château, and some good shooting close to her own people in her rich, green land of Normandy, where the cider was pure, and where she knew how to cook a hare *à la chasseur* to perfection, and where monsieur could have some pleasure in life, and receive his friends and roar with laughter, and kick off his muddy boots before the fire with his good comrades over the incidents so amusing of the day's shooting. They would go crabbing at Longrune, and to the market at Dosulé to sell their spare heifers and calves, and monsieur would lose that careworn, gray expression and grow fat and healthy.

Marie dreamed of these things as she ran her mistress's pink ribbons, or pricked her strong Norman fingers while embroidering the initials of Rose Van Cortlandt's maiden name on the satin-damask towels.

There were moments, too, when the tears welled to Marie's fine gray eyes; moments when she regretted ever having seen America, its wages, or its society; moments when she wondered what had become of Gaston since he married the daughter of the Père Miron and set up a saddler shop of his own in Lisseux. Gaston had given her a thin, silver ring; she wore it still.

So much had happened since then. She had been maid of all work in Paris to Mademoiselle Yvonne de St. Cyr, a popular actress at the Folies Parisiennes,

and had learned to keep her mouth shut and her eyes open for fifty francs a month, wine included. Then the young marquis died, and his noble family buried him, and Yvonne was turned out for debt, and gave Marie her sick Caniche poodle in payment for two months' wages, together with her signed photograph and a note of recommendation—a scribbled eulogy on highly scented paper, hastily recommending Marie to the world at large, which Marie carried in her portmonnaie from one intelligence office in Paris to another, until it became so dirty, creased, and worn she was ashamed to show it to a lady, and was finally perused and accepted by Mrs. Van Cortlandt, who was at her wit's end that sultry September day to find a maid, finish with the dressmaker, and sail for America. *C'est la vie—quoi?* Marie often consoled herself by tearfully exclaiming, which many a French girl had said before her under far worse circumstances.

It seemed this morning, the day before the smart event, that the postman had brought the last of the acceptances. As Marie entered her mistress's bedroom Rose Van Cortlandt sat propped up in bed among the lace pillows, the glistening folds of her dark hair falling about her fine shoulders, contrasting charmingly with a pale-pink peignoir. She received the breakfast tray piled with notes which Marie slid deftly across her knees, with the cager delight of a child, and began to open the notes hastily—one after the other. One she reread twice, Marie noticed, as

she busied herself laying out her mistress's things, read it again, her black eyes merry with delight, a smile playing about the corners of her lips.

"You're a dear!" she heard her mistress exclaim. She thrust the note aside from the rest, quickly finished her coffee and toast, scanned the remainder of the notes, ordered her bath and her coupé at the same time, and before three-quarters of an hour had elapsed was dressed and out of the house. First down to Park & Tilford's, then up to Delmonico's, to be sure they understood about the terrapin. Then on to see for herself about the palms, the roses, the awning, and a wagon-load of gilded chairs. So it was not until her mistress was well out of the house that Marie could read the note her lady had lingered over.

Marie turned up the lace pillows. It was not there. She opened one drawer after another, and finally discovered it tucked between her mistress's evening gloves.

It ran as follows:

My Dear Lady,

Of course I'll come. Who could ever refuse you anything? You're a *dear* to want me. I fear I made a wretched botch of my accompaniments the other afternoon for your little protégeé. If so, forgive me. Gladys has gone to Saratoga with the Verniers for two weeks at least. You know how I hate travelling, besides New York is amusing enough. Thank you again, dear friend. *Au revoir—à bientôt,* and my kindest regards to your good husband.

Your ever devoted,

Pierre Lamont.

Marie tucked it back among the gloves in the precise position it had lain, and closed the drawer. "*Quel numéro! ce Monsieur Lamont!*" she smiled to herself as she emptied her lady's bath.

As for Sam Van Cortlandt, he too had left his house this morning after an early breakfast, which Griggs, his butler, served him in silence in the gloomy, sumptuous dining-room, and which his master barely touched. As Griggs handed him his coat, hat, and stick in the brighter light of the hall, the butler noticed a marked change in his master's manner. His short, wiry body moved in jerks. He was intensely nervous. His firm, smug, clean-shaven face wore an expression little short of haggard. He drove his short arms impatiently into the sleeves of the light gray overcoat Griggs held for him, grasped his proffered stick and derby, briskly shot out of the door to his waiting coupé, and sprang into it. His coachman, noticing his haste, drove him at a faster pace than usual down to his office in William Street.

Griggs watched the bay mare rouse herself into a smart trot and turn the corner of 34th Street. Then he went back and closed the heavy grilled door of the vestibule, wondering what had happened. He stood meditating for some moments, gazing out through the steel spindles of the grille.

'Perhaps it's the madam," he concluded, and returned to his pantry, though still wondering over the change in him, and its reason.

Sam Van Cortlandt could have enlightened him in

four words had he chosen. That he was long in wheat. That he had plunged and lost disastrously. How much he dared not confess, even to himself. He had not dared tell Rose. He was in no condition to stand a scene, and besides he knew her of old. The one thing she detested was a serious discussion over the question of money; any hint on his part over the lack of it he knew she would receive in a tantrum. She abhorred any mention of economy. She had a disregard, a positive disdain for economy, which was past all reasoning. She had gone through several big sums since their marriage—fortunes in themselves—which he had put at her disposal, as easily as a schoolgirl empties a box of bonbons. The musicale to a man of his wealth was only a detail of their winter's entertaining, but as he felt this morning, it was an extravagance that, in view of the present critical situation, he could ill afford. What it would cost he had only a vague idea of. Rose had attended to that; moreover, he knew she had not left a luxury unordered. Last month's account at Park & Tilford's stood out conspicuously on their books as a record. Even the clerk who figured it up opened his eyes. Then dinner after dinner; luncheon after luncheon. Gowns from Paris, hats from Fifth Avenue, and a necklace from Tiffany's whose cost alone would have ruined many a man considered comfortably off; a peace-offering to make life worth living again after their tiff over the Huntley dinner, an occasion when the faithful Griggs had let him in at daylight, that hour when the cheerful spar-

rows who have slept well, chirp their virtues to you mockingly, and the rattle of the milk-cans shivers your nerves. Rose had not only thanked him; she had impulsively kissed him for it on the top of his gray head, once for every pearl, and with so much semblance of forgiveness that he had gone down-town the next day in the best of good-humor.

His wealth!

His plunge in wheat this time was serious. Other men as rich as he had played the same game and been completely ruined. There was Dick Thomson, for instance, who in three days' speculating became a pauper, was kept afloat for a time by the grace of two of his biggest creditors, and was finally swept off his feet in the tide-way of financial ruin, and sank out of sight and memory.

As the bay mare sped on down Fifth Avenue Van Cortlandt looked at himself in the narrow mirror panelled between the coupé windows. What he saw was a man on the verge of a nervous breakdown, but he stiffened up his clean-shaven chin, rubbed his haggard eyes, and laid most of his condition to late dinners.

It never occurred to him that he was getting what he deserved; that the unscrupulous methods he had so successfully pursued in the past, as Enoch had truthfully declared, "from New Orleans to San Francisco," were retaliating; that in some measure the ruin and misery he had swept broadcast, was being avenged. For years success had gone along with him, arm in arm, like a boon companion, unfailing. Everything

he had wished for, fought for, success had given him: wealth, position, a rich harvest from big deals that flattered him and surprised Wall Street—his immunity from conviction at the hands of the Supreme Court. Defeated in his scheme for nomination as governor, success had handed him new riches in compensation. Success had stood by him, protected him, saved him through a hundred reckless ventures. To-day the ghost of success sat beside him as helpless as a skeleton. He reached his office with quivering nerves. The slump in wheat continued. Wall Street was in a panic, the Produce Exchange a frenzied bedlam.

The Stock Exchange opened in an uproar. Its floor a bawling, shouting, frantic mass of members. From the gallery they resembled a black mass of humanity drowning in a whirlpool, their white hands stretched desperately above their heads as they signalled to sell. Some managed to be seen by their rescuers and were saved in the nick of time by a put or call. Others continued to gesticulate and shout hopelessly; others elbowed, shoved, swayed back, recovered, and fought their way through to buy. Men made decisions with that nerve and lightning rapidity born of their trade. The man who hesitated was lost. Every fresh minute the rise and fall of stocks flashed on the announcement boards spelled safety or defeat. Wheat continued to drop; what had been yours was now another's. Wealth appeared, reappeared, and vanished. Losses in cold figures appeared and remained. Men with blanched faces stared grimly at

each other in passing. Wheat dropped five points and a fraction. Those who had won yelled out of sheer exuberance. Fortune, the mother of all gambling—looked down on them with a smile; she was used to such scenes as these. It was a common sight to her to see her children ruined—or in luck.

In the centre of this howling mob—his battered derby hat on the back of his head, dazed, white, and trembling—stood Sam Van Cortlandt. He was slowly tearing to bits a scrap of paper upon which he had jotted down an order that, had it been carried out, would have got him into worse difficulties. A moment before he had braced every nerve in him and decided to risk it, but his nerve had failed him. He was done for, and he knew it. A few moments later he found himself on the fringe of the howling mob. Outcasts frequent the borders. The noise in the great room had been deafening. He found a certain relief and comparative quiet in the corridor. Men stalked about it, some in silence. Jonas Fair & Co. had gone down with the crash. Sims & Jenkins, too. The list was long. Where was his friend Success who had played him false? Dead.

He made his way back to his office, scarcely conscious of the street corners he turned. When he reached it he locked himself in his private room, lighted a cigar, and for all of half an hour paced the floor.

The conclusion he came to was, that he would not announce the failure of Samuel Van Cortlandt until the day after to-morrow—the day after the musicale.

Rose should know nothing until then. Like a man in grave danger, he had thought of a thousand things in those agonizing moments in which wheat dropped, point by point, relentlessly, without mercy. The roar and clamor of the Stock Exchange still rang in his ears. He had tried to recuperate his loss in wheat there. He was practically ruined, and yet he could not realize it. He went out, bought a new derby hat, entered a bar in Nassau Street, and ordered a stiff brandy cocktail—over it he came to another conclusion: to sell his house on Park Avenue and all it contained.

At a little before nine the following evening a long line of coupés and broughams, hired or owned, moved slowly toward the Van Cortlandt awning. As each equipage halted before it the street crowd of the poorer class, who had gathered together for a glimpse of the rich, caught hurried visions of dainty, satin-slippered feet, sleek silk ankles, and soft evening wraps. They stood craning their necks at fair women, in whose clean, well-kept hair glittered jewels, whose white throats were circled in pearls and brilliants, and who neither glanced to the right nor left, but followed their escorts up the carpeted steps, through the steel-grilled vestibule, and past Griggs, into the brilliantly lighted hall beyond, which was as far as the crowd could see. The night was starry, crisp, and clear. The faint odor of a dozen perfumes hung in the cool air under the awning. This vapor of riches was all these fine la-

dies left in their wake to the poor curiously watching them.

Rose Van Cortlandt never looked more seductively beautiful than she did to-night—stunning in a gown of black jet, her bare neck and arms ivory white, a wreath of diamonds sparkling in her dark, undulated hair—thorough mistress of herself, and clean as a cat.

She stood receiving her guests in the big ball room filled with the gilded chairs, a celebrated room by Marcotte, gay and fragrant to-night in American beauty roses, its extreme end screened by a forest of palms, leading out to the conservatory. Before this mass of palms stood a low platform, holding a long, black, polished concert grand, fresh from Steinway. The entire front of this platform was hedged with orchids and violets.

Rose had left nothing unordered. The neatly engraved programme announced no less an extravagance than the Mozart stringed sextet—six solemn-looking gentlemen, skilled in chamber music, who knew nobody present, and whose business it was to dispense symphonies and sonatas that no one understood, at the highest price attainable. Moreover, Madame Pavia Visconti, late of the Royal Opera of Milan (how late, that motherly looking, fat, and florid contralto did not confess), was to sing twice, relieved by Mr. Gwyn-Jones, basso, whose deep and formidable ballads had rumbled through New York successfully for two seasons. It was not until the second part, after

the terrapin and champagne, that Sue Preston's name appeared.

Never had the task that lay before her seemed harder to Sue than it did to-night. She had steeled herself to the coming ordeal for days, too brave to back out, and wholly in ignorance of the magnificence of the affair or the importance of the artists engaged. She had sung at the tea as she supposed for nothing; the next morning's mail had brought a check from Rose Van Cortlandt for fifty dollars and a sweet note of appreciation. Mrs. Ford beamed with pride when she read it. Ebner Ford's satisfaction was marked. To-night Rose Van Cortlandt had insisted on Sue accepting one hundred dollars.

"Really, Mrs. Van Cortlandt, I'm not worth it," Sue had said in her embarrassment.

"Hush, dear," Mrs. Van Cortlandt had returned, giving her a sound hug and a kiss. "I'm the better judge of that."

At that moment up-stairs in her hostess's bedroom where the young girl had left her wraps, lay a surprise beside her evening coat—a tiny green-leather box from Tiffany's, containing a small brooch of pearls and diamonds and a check for a hundred dollars.

Rose Van Cortlandt had taken her under her wing the moment she had arrived and had kept her beside her, presenting her to dozens of people she had never heard of and who thought her lovely enough to hover around her, dressed as she was to-night in a simple white gown, without a jewel, a bunch of moss-roses

held in a pale-blue sash at her waist. They asked her all about herself, her voice, the fascinating career she had entered. Smartly dressed men bent over her, swept their blasé gaze over her lithe, girlish figure, looked greedily into her frank, blue eyes, and paid her naïve little compliments out of ear-shot of their wives.

Sentences not at all meant for her small, rosy ears reached her, such as "Where's the little girl? I must have a look at her again, old chap." This from a tall, young Englishman to another of his race, who had already been presented to Sue three consecutive times—her simple answer, "I think we've met before," and his "Rather," not deterring him from a fourth opportunity. Women confided to each other: "Isn't she a sweet little thing—and what a skin, my dear!" and agreed that Rose Van Cortlandt's protégée was "simply fascinating—she earns her living, I'm told."

To the young girl, frightened at first, flushed and sensitive, the glamour of all this had its effect. Little by little the fear in her heart subsided, the subtle intoxication of all this beauty, wealth, and luxury was even stronger. Her old courage came back to her. She felt that it was the opportunity of her life. She would do her best. She adored Rose Van Cortlandt. She had been kindness itself to her. Somehow she felt a strange happiness tingling through her veins. She *felt* like singing.

"Ah! I've a bone to pick with you, Rose," laughed Lamont, striding up to his hostess, smiling and immaculate as usual.

"How dear of you to come, Pierre," said she, grasping his hand.

"Think of it, Miss Preston," continued Lamont, turning disconsolately to Sue, "this dear lady here absolutely forbade me to send the coupé for you to-night—wasn't it selfish of her? There's the coupé doing absolutely nothing—oh! I'm not discouraged. You'll let me try again, won't you?"

"Now, Pierre, don't get peevish," laughed his hostess. "What a spoiled infant you are. I sent for this little girl myself—didn't I, deary?"

"It *was* so kind of you, Mrs. Van Cortlandt," Sue replied. "You know I could just as well have taken the car."

"No, you couldn't have," declared Lamont. "Not in that pretty dress of yours. What a filthy vehicle a street-car is, anyway. Have you ever stopped to think of the people you are obliged to sit next to—ugh!—or where they came from?—people who step all over you, and never think of begging your pardon. Do you realize that in America the middle classes have no manners whatever? It's a fact. I assure you in France and Italy it is quite different. Even the most wretchedly poor are polite. It is as inborn as their religion. Then those untouchable nickels the conductor hands you in change." His quick, black eyes noticed that Rose had turned to welcome the Jimmy Browns, and his voice sank almost to a pathetic whisper as he added hurriedly to Sue: "Do let me take you home to-night—please—won't you?"

He looked at her tenderly, full into her blue eyes, his old skilful smile pleading for that hurried whispered "Yes," which so many other women, failing to resist, had recklessly granted him.

"Why, I—why—I'm afraid I can't—really I can't, Mr. Lamont," stammered Sue. "You see, I've already promised Mrs. Van Cortlandt."

"Then arrange it," he begged softly, taking advantage of these few words alone with her. "Please, won't you? Say you'll try. You'll make me so happy if you will. I'm so terribly lonely."

"Lonely!" She flushed slightly, and added with a forced little laugh: "But you don't look lonely, Mr. Lamont."

"I am, nevertheless. I'm wretchedly lonely," he declared.

He was on the point of playing his trump-card, but feared he would have to play it too hastily to bring any satisfactory result—liable as they were at any instant to be interrupted. Lamont's trump-card consisted in confiding to a woman his domestic unhappiness. The trick is not new, by any means; of convincing her of his unhappy marriage; that of all the women in the world his wife least understood him and his sensitive nature; that, although he was too loyal a fellow to say anything that might be misconstrued against her, he felt *she* (to whom he was speaking) would understand how much he suffered. He was not like other men; he had a heart that needed affection, craved affection. His married life had been a hollow

mockery, devoid of that love which he craved, which as a boy he had founded his ideals upon. Cupid had treated him like a tyrant. He had held out everything to him, and given him nothing but an empty, aching heart, a life of loneliness such as few men had known. Where would it all end? Often he omitted this last phrase and ceased speaking until she saw the tears welling to his eyes; then his quick: "Forgive me. Life's a hard game, isn't it? There are moments when we all break down—even the bravest of us."

This seldom, if ever, failed to land them.

He cut this to-night, and contented himself by continuing to persist about his coupé. He would tell Mrs. Van Cortlandt himself, he declared. "It would be all right. I want you to feel the coupé is at your disposal whenever you wish it. There, you see I'm frank—I can't bear to think of you travelling in those wretched cars."

"But, Mr. Lamont!" exclaimed Sue, at a loss for a better reply.

"Whenever you wish it—and as often," he added, and turned graciously to his hostess, satisfied that he had ended his little tête-à-tête at precisely the right moment. Another word, he felt, would have ruined his chances, considering her age.

"Where's Sam?" he asked. "I've been hunting all over for him."

"My dear Pierre, Sam's quite wretched," confessed Rose.

"Really? Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Nothing serious. Just one of his old attacks of neuralgia," she explained. "He came home early and went to bed. I told him he was better off there than trying to buoy himself up with all these people. You know how Sam loathes big parties." She bent close to him. "Tell me, is the room pretty?"

"Simply stunning. Rose, you're wonderful. Do you know that before I came up to you to-night, I stood for a long moment watching you. Is there anything lovelier than a beautiful woman? How well Marie does your hair."

"Hush, Pierre! I implore you."

"You're gorgeously beautiful, Rose."

"Pierre—do be careful."

"You dear," he added. The two words spoken just audibly enough to reach her heart unnoticed. Then with a bow that would have done honor to a diplomat, he raised her small hand to his lips, and disappeared in the throng to find a vacant gilded chair.

He found it close to the stage, next to pretty little Mrs. Selwyn-Rivers, who had been anxiously keeping it for him, and whose husband, Colonel Selwyn-Rivers, had granted her a snug fortune and a separation, and made no bones about either. She was in pink to-night, and now that Pierre was seated, in a good-humor, and while the six wise men drew their bows through the first and second part of a Mozart symphony, kept up a whispered conversation to Lamont over the care and breeding of Scotch terriers; neither the operatic arias of Madame Pavia Visconti, nor the heroic souls

that Mr. Gwyn-Jones, basso, confined to the depths of the deep sea, the blacksmith's forge, or the dark forest, could shake this exquisite little blonde with her retroussé nose, who flirted as easily as she lied, from declaring, as she babbled on, that her Belle of Dinmont II was a better dog than Lucie Vernier's Scotch Lassie, and if the judges had not seen it, it was due to that lady in question's absurd attentions to Jack Farrell, who, Lamont agreed, was as clever a judge of terriers as existed.

And so the musicale proceeded. Warmed and wakened up by the terrapin and champagne, they actually listened to Sue's fresh young voice, and applauded her vociferously. It was not until her first encore that she caught sight of Mr. Joseph Grimsby standing by the door. Joe, who at parties was usually irrepressible and in a rollicking good-humor, two qualities that made him a favorite with the debutantes wherever he went, stood listening attentively. Indeed, that young gentleman was drinking in every note; notes that reached Joe's heart to-night—more than that, he realized that Sue was an artist, whether she was conscious of it or not.

One of the six wise men who accompanied her—a pale, sandy-haired, studious-looking man, with long, vibrant hands, kept his eyes constantly upon her as she sang, with a curious dreamy expression of surprise and admiration. This man was a marvellous accompanist. He seemed to have understood Sue instantly, as quickly as he had memorized her accompaniments,

scarcely glancing at her music before him. He steadied her from the first; made her sure of herself. When Lamont had played for her it had been a far different feeling. Light and inconsequent as was his nature, he had expressed its shallowness on the piano. Enoch's words flashed back to her. The man at the piano, who was no other than the violinist Ivan Palowsky, had made her feel. It was as if he had taken her firmly by the hand and led her through an ordeal over whose coming she had worked and suffered for days, and which, now that it was successfully over, made her eyes sparkle and her heart light with sheer joy. She thanked him warmly as she left the stage.

"It is I who thank you," said he, hesitated, and with a look that Sue did not forget, added: "You sing like my little girl, Anna. It is now this year that I go back to Russia to see her. Ah! yes, you made me feel that I again hear her sing—so young, so sweet, so pure. Some day you let me play for you again, eh? Yes—yes, I come." His sad face brightened, and with an awkward bow he turned away to join his companions in the final number. They had genially condescended to close the performance with a gay tarantella.

Sue was now the centre of admiration. They showered her with compliments. Lamont, who had skilfully gotten rid of Mrs. Selwyn-Rivers and her kennel of prize breeds, was again beside her, pleading to take her home. He called her "his little playmate," ran off for a glass of champagne which she barely touched, and an ice which she devoured.

Sue had been showered with so many compliments this exciting evening that one more did not matter. This came from Joe, who made his way through the group about her, and thanked her heartily in his breezy way.

Sue looked up in his genial, boyish face for the second time, conscious of how good-looking he was, and how frankly and sincerely he expressed himself. Joe's was a pleasant, healthy countenance for any young girl to look upon. His eyes twinkled to-night in his exuberance, and his big, strong hand grasped hers with boyish sincerity. In fact, he brought with him to that overheated artificial ballroom, a breath of wholesome air.

Lamont continued in opportune moments to insist on taking her home, half turning his back on Joe, who had interrupted him just as he felt that his persuasion had succeeded.

"Mr. Lamont, I can't," declared Sue firmly. "I've promised Mrs. Van Cortlandt." Something in his manner worried her. Something she did not like, and which might have been traced to Sam Van Cortlandt's vintage brut.

"Oh! come along," exclaimed Lamont finally, his eyes sparkling like black diamonds.

Joe took his leave. "Good night, and thank you again," he said heartily. "Hope I'll see you soon," he laughed. "You know we share the same stairs," and with that he was gone. At that instant, too, a quiet personage touched Sue lightly on the arm.

It was Enoch.

"Why, Mr. Crane!" she exclaimed, her young face alight.

Lamont straightened; instantly his whole manner changed. The elder man paid not the slightest attention to him.

"I thought I'd take you home, my child," said Enoch.

"But—Mr. Crane," faltered Sue, "I've promised Mrs. Van Cortlandt——"

"I've seen to that," said Enoch pleasantly, as he gave her his arm. With a rapidity that amazed her, Pierre Lamont bid her good night. Enoch had known the Van Cortlandts for years, and though for a long while he had persistently declined their hospitality, the fact that Sue was to sing, and his anxiety over Lamont's attentions to her, had brought him to the musicale.

He had known Sam even before his unscrupulous business deals, a fact to which was due their later estrangement—even before his runaway match with Rose Dickson, who was then considered the prettiest girl in Troy, an orphan who at sixteen went to live with her Uncle Jim, in Plattsburg, and who availed herself of that old sport's trotting stock and a buggy of her own whenever it pleased her. Her Uncle Jim had spoiled her. Who had not spoiled Rose? She was too devilish pretty, and had a will of her own equal to a two-year-old in harness on her first week's rations of oats.

At eighteen Sam Van Cortlandt had met her. He never said where, but it is presumed at a picnic. With a high-school graduation as proof of her education, and two years at a fashionable girls' college, cut short by her marriage, Rose had entered society—a polishing school in which with her woman's adaptability and Sam's money, she quickly acquired that varnish of refinement and good breeding which so often passes as being to the manner born.

At a quarter past eight the next morning Griggs rapped at the double door of his master's bedroom. Getting no response, he entered. Before him, face down on the Turkish rug by the bed, one arm doubled under him, his right hand outstretched, clutching a pearl-handled revolver, lay Sam Van Cortlandt—a bullet-hole through his brain. He had been dead several hours.

CHAPTER IX

Life tragedies happen swiftly, with a simplicity that is appalling. People seldom scream; they stand agape, or rush out of the house, dragging back a doctor who can do nothing, or a policeman who can do even less. It was Griggs who told Rose Van Cortlandt. It was the second time he had been through a similar experience. Five years before as valet to the young Earl of Lowden, he had found him a suicide in his villa at Dinard. He, too, had been gambling.

Griggs had gone straight to the bedroom door of his mistress. She was asleep. Her husband's room, being separated from hers by a bathroom, a dressing-room, a boudoir, and two closed doors, not a sound of the tragedy had reached her.

"Something of the utmost importance, madam," called Griggs, rapping sharply and rousing her.

"Come in," she said sleepily.

The butler entered, and stood for a moment immovable as a statue before her.

"Madam," said he, "I have come to you with bad news—with terrible news, madam."

She sat bolt upright in bed. His words and manner awakened her as if she had been struck with a whip. She stared at him wide-eyed, with compressed lips.

"Well?" she breathed tensely.

"Mr. Van Cortlandt is dead."

Griggs saw her clutch at the lace coverlet. She did not utter a sound.

"He has shot himself, madam."

She drew her knees up under the coverlet and buried her face in her hands. For a long moment neither spoke.

Suddenly she looked up, white as the pillows about her.

"Where is he?" she asked.

"In his room, madam—madam will permit me to tell her that it is better madam does not go there at once."

Griggs withdrew, closed the bedroom door, and rang for Marie. To that now hysterical girl, gasping out her *mon Dieu's!* he repeated again briefly what had happened, commanding her to be calm. "Calm as your mistress, do you hear?"

As Marie tremblingly started to enter the bedroom Rose Van Cortlandt opened the door in her dressing-gown. She stood straight, her lungs filled with a deep breath.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*" sobbed Marie afresh.

"Go to your room," said her mistress, "and wait there until I call you." Then she made her way to his door, to gaze at him whom she had held in high esteem.

The news of Sam Van Cortlandt's failure and suicide flashed through New York, was galloped up-town in

special editions, greasy wet from the press, was bawled out by newsboys, was discussed in clubs and bedrooms, in boudoirs, in street-cars, at dinners and theatre-parties, for all of a day, and subsided the next into stale news, the long sensational columns contracting to short biographies of his financial career, and a photograph taken of him several years previous, retouched with Chinese white. The following day the press contented itself with a paid announcement of his funeral. The least surprised of all was Wall Street. Friends of his had long ago warned him that his system of speculation was suicidal. They were right.

To Rose Van Cortlandt the blow was a bitter one. Everything she had loved—wealth, position—had been swept away from her, her position in society depending wholly upon his wealth. The note he left upon his night table was of a private nature, intended solely for his wife and not for these pages. In a month the few intimate friends she saw had grown tired of telling her how charming she looked in black. In the settling of the estate, despite the money owed to his creditors, Sam had left her far from penniless. The house in Park Avenue was sold, and all it contained—the pictures alone bringing her a comfortable fortune that many another woman in her situation would have been satisfied with. Rose Van Cortlandt considered it a mere pittance. She found a bond of sympathy among other widows who had been reduced to twenty-five thousand a year.

Lamont became a frequent visitor to her smart little studio apartment in Washington Square—to which Sue was never invited, and where we shall leave Rose Van Cortlandt to the care of a few so-called Bohemians to consume her whiskey and cigarettes.

Enoch was doing an unheard-of thing—for Enoch—straightening up the living-room of his hermitage on the top floor, slowly transforming this much-beloved refuge of his from its pell-mell accumulation to a semblance of neatness and order. The idea had struck him suddenly, following a decision which he had come to the evening before, as he sat hunched up in his big leather chair before the fire thinking over past events, the Van Cortlandt suicide being one of them.

He had left his card at the house of mourning with a formal word of sympathy, more than that he felt he could not do. He had argued with himself for more than an hour, trying to decide whether or not to write the widow a letter of condolence, and had begun two at his desk, both of which he destroyed as being false in sentiment and not honestly in keeping with his opinion of the deceased, whose business methods he had so openly denounced to the Fords. True, he had accepted her invitation, and gone to the musicale, but in this case it was Sue who was solely responsible for his presence. What he had expected had happened—he had found Lamont, despite his warning to him, pleading to take her home. He had arrived in the

nick of time to offer her his arm and his club cab, both of which she had gladly accepted.

The old room during all the years it had warmed and sheltered Enoch, had become, little by little, so choked with books, bibelots, and souvenirs, some of them utterly useless to him, that he had only now awakened to the fact that there was little floor space left for his feet to wander over, and he was continually upsetting this and that, whenever he moved. Nooks on the table and mantelpiece, where he was wont to lay his pipe, spectacles, and tobacco, were now hard to find, and were continually being smothered under letters, books, and pamphlets—Matilda and Moses having strict orders to keep everything tidy, and to touch nothing.

"'Spec' I fine him snowed under some mornin', an' have to dig him out," remarked Matilda. "Gittin' so bad, Mister Rabbit wouldn't have no show gittin' through—reg'lar claptrapshun place—bad's my ole pot-closet, whar I used to stow 'way mah broom. 'Bresh up! Bresh up!' he sez to me, 'Matilda.' Jes' ez ef I cud straighten out dat dar conglomeraction, 'thout techin' it—mah lordy! but I do certainly despize dust, man."

"'Tain't no common dust," Moses would reply. "'Spec' yo better keep yo black han's offum dat yere dust—ain't yo never heerd tell of immo'tal dust? Ef you ain't, yo ain't never read yo Bible. Dem things, like dust an' ashes dar, is sacred."

Enoch had begun his house-cleaning with a will. He was in no humor to be interrupted. He went at his work grimly, his teeth set; the hopelessness of the task appalled him.

For a while he prowled around his bookcases, grumbling over the many useless volumes, which like unwelcome tramps had lain hidden snug in their berths among those dear to him. One after another he routed these vagabonds out of their nests, and flung them in a pile on the floor for Matilda to cart away in her blue apron, and present them to the ash-man if she chose. Some of these trashy novels had the ill-luck to be discovered in the company of the product of such able masters as Thackeray and Dickens, Scott and Fielding, Balzac, Hugo, and Maupassant. These latter in French, which he read fluently. One yellow paper-covered novel he raised above his head and sent slamming to the floor.

"Trash!" he cried aloud—a habit with him when he was roused and was forced to speak his mind for the benefit of his own ears. "Trash! That's what they want nowadays—a novel never gets interesting to them until they get to the divorce—artificial heroines who make you shudder, whose morals and manners are no better than a trull's in a tavern, and heroes whom I always feel like kicking—a lot of well-dressed cads. As for style, it's gone to the dogs. They do not even speak correct English, much less write it. There's not one of them who could produce a page of Thackeray or Flaubert if they were to hang for it. What

they write for is the publisher and his check. It's that infernal check that has prodded on more writers to ruin than it ever helped. The more money they can make, the more mediocre and sensational they get—scarcely a page that is not cooked up like a pudding—one quart of sentimentality to two heaping pints of sensation, add a scant teaspoonful of pathos, sprinkle with a happy ending, and serve hot before the last novel gets cold. Slop! and drivel!" he snarled, scraping out the bowl of his strongest pipe, and stuffing it with fine-cut Virginia that would have bitten any less hardy tongue than Enoch's. He searched in vain for a match; discovered Rose Van Cortlandt's invitation, tore it in two, rolled one half into a lighter, kindled it over the blazing logs in his fireplace, lighted his favorite brierwood, and began to snort and puff the smoke through his nostrils, his pipe doggedly clenched between his teeth, his opinion of modern literature gruffly subsiding in grunts. Then he returned to his books.

He plucked out another—"Muriel's Choice"—and turned to the fly-leaf. On it was hastily scribbled in pencil in a woman's angular handwriting—all ups and downs: "Do read this, Mr. Crane; so sorry to to have missed you. Emma Jackson." He turned the pages with a rip under his thumb.

"About as light as Emma," he remarked, recalling that person to his mind, whose attentions had annoyed him when he was a young student at law. He was about to send it spinning to the pile when he noticed

it contained several woodcut illustrations depicting the lovelorn and unhappy Muriel at various stages of her romantic history. Muriel seemed always to be waiting for him—at the old turnstile 'neath the mournful drooping willows; at the rain-flecked library window, listening for the grating sound of his carriage wheels; again at the stile. This time she had brought her Newfoundland dog.

"They'll do for the children to color," reflected Enoch, referring to a hospital charity he never mentioned to others.

He laid the book aside, straightened up, drew a deep, courageous breath, and riveted his gaze on the centre-table.

"What'll I do with all that?" he exclaimed aloud, scratching his gray head, half tempted to dump the whole of it into his bedroom closet, and sort it later. Then he realized there were important papers buried under the pamphlets and books, bills and receipts that needed filing, and more than one unanswered letter.

He began with the books, mostly scientific works, which had lately served him as reference in an article on economics he had written for the *Atlantic Monthly* modestly over his initials, and which had been widely quoted. These filled the gaps left by the pile on the floor. The letters, bills, and receipts he stowed away in the drawers of an old-fashioned mahogany desk beside his fire. One of these drawers, the small one over his inkstand, was locked. This he rarely opened,

though he carried its flat key on the end of his watch-chain—had, in fact, for years.

Matilda thought it was where he kept his money. Had his strong-box been open on the table, its contents would have been as safe with Matilda and Moses as if under the protection of his own pocket.

The old room, now that the books were in place, the table cleared and neatly arranged, and the chairs pushed back into cosey corners, began to assume an air of hospitality, and that is precisely why Enoch had cleared it up. There remained, however, a final touch of welcome, which he put on his hat and hurried out for—a gorgeous bunch of red Jacqueminot roses. These he arranged in an old Chinese porcelain bowl on the centre-table. This done, he surveyed his domain, with a feeling of relief and satisfaction, and rang for Matilda.

"For de land's sakes!" exclaimed that honest soul, as she poked her bandannaed head into the open doorway, and stood with her arms planted on her big hips, while she glanced around her at the change. "Befo' de Lord, ef it doan look scrumpsush."

"Needed it," muttered Enoch, turning a furrowed brow upon her, as he bent to smell the roses.

"Dat it suttenly did, marser. 'Tain't de fust time I tole Moses I'se been worryin' over de looks of dis yere place. Ain't had no fixin' up like dis in y'ars. Dat's sartin'. 'Spec' youse 'spectin' company, ain't you?"

"That's why I sent for you, Matilda—where's Moses?"

"He's a pokin' of his fiah down in de cellar—ain't yo felt de heat?"

She bent down on her knees, and opened the register between the bookcases, a puff of dust accompanied the hot air, sending her hand across her eyes, her voice choking.

"Gwine to strangle me, is yo? Keep yo mouf shut d'yer hear me, till I clean yo face so's you kin open it 'thout insultin' yo betters," she commanded, snapping shut the register, and wiping it with her apron.

"Matilda," said Enoch, as she rose to her feet, his eyes kindling with good-humor for the first time that morning, "I've invited a few friends this afternoon to tea."

"Yas, suh——"

"It isn't as easy as you think, Matilda. You and Moses will have to attend to it—cakes, sandwiches, teacups, and all."

He drew out his portfolio, and handed her a ten-dollar bill, which she received respectfully and tucked deep in her bosom.

"Is—is yo gwine to hab quality, marser—or just plain tea?"

"Both," smiled Enoch. "Miss Preston and her mother are coming at five, Mr. Ford also, the Misses Moulton, and Mr. Grimsby. Six in all, Matilda."

"Ah see," returned Matilda with conviction. "Wot you might call mixed company."

Enoch raised his eyebrows sharply in surprise.

"'Tain't de tea, nor de kittle, nor de cakes, nor de sandwhiches, nor de bilin' water, what's a worryin' me," declared Matilda. "It's de doilies—I ain't got 'em, marser, but I kin git 'em, an' dey ainter goin' ter cost no ten-dollar bill, neider."

"But the teacups?" he intervened anxiously. "Here, I'll give you a note to Vantine's—ask for Mr. Gresham." He turned briskly to the desk and opened his inkstand.

"Ain't no use in goin' dar," she protested. "Ain't no Mister Gresham's got 'em. *I* got 'em, an' dey ain't no common kitchen china, neider. Dey's wot my Mistiss Mary left me when de good Lord done come an' tuk 'er from me." Her voice quavered. "Dey's de best. Dey's so white an' fine, yo kin see yo han' through 'em, an' dey's got lit'l' gold rims round 'em, an' handles no thicker'n er butterfly's wing. Doan' s'pose I'se er gwine let Miss Sue drink outer no common store trash, does yer? Um! um!—mouf like er rosebud. 'Mines me er mah young mistiss when she was jes about her aige, an' young Capt'n Pendleton come up to de big house to see 'er. Bimeby he seen me, an' come inter de kitchen, whar I was a mixin' an' a stirrin', and a stirrin' an' a mixin', for de hot corn cakes, an' de waffles for de supper dat evenin'. 'Matilda,' he sez to me, all a shinin' in his uniform, 'I'se gwine teck yo babby 'way from you, d'yer hear me, nigger? She's done lived long nuf lone in dis heah lonesome place—er eatin 'out 'er heart.' Den I begun to shook an' shake, an' I got er tremblin' in mah knees, an' I

cudn't say nuffin for de sobbin' an' de cryin'. Den he 'gun to laf, an' he come over an' laid his han' 'pon my shoulder. Den I see his eyes was er twinklin' like de stars in de heaven.

"'Miss Mary an' I'se gwine be married,' says he.

"'Yo ain't er gwine teck 'er 'way from 'er ole mammy, is you?' sez I. 'See heah,' sez I, 'Marse Pendleton, I done brought 'er up—I done nussed 'er. I ain't never let 'er outer mah sight fer twenty years ever since she was a babby.'

"Den he 'gun to talk 'bout devotion an' pholosophy —an', an' de end. 'Dere ain't goin' to be no end,' says I. 'She ain't never even dressed herself, alone, yit; nor combed 'er own har. Dere ain't been a mornin', nor an evenin', nor er night, dat her ole mammy wa'n't dar to help 'er.' Den I see he was er smilin. 'Mammy,' sez he, 'youse gwine long wid us.' 'Praise de Lord,' sez I. An' dat's de way I happin to come North, Marser Crane. I wanter goin' let mah young mistiss be travellin' round 'mong dem Northerners, 'thout her ole mammy to teck cyar of 'er."

She ceased speaking, and moved slowly toward the door. "I'll git everythin' ready fer de tea," she said, brightening. "You needn't worry 'bout nothin', Marser Crane. 'Tain't de fust time mah ole Moses an' I'se waited on comp'ny."

Enoch stood listening to her as she descended the stairs. She was crooning softly to herself in a minor key:

"Moonlight on de swamp an' 'possum in de tree. . ."

Enoch leaned over the banisters; then the door of her kitchen closed upon her and he returned to his room. For a long moment he stood thoughtfully before his desk, thinking of her devotion, of what the death of her mistress must have meant to her, of the vicissitudes in the years that followed, of their present sordid quarters in comparison to the "big house," its great rooms, and its bygone hospitality, the picture she had drawn of that young Captain Pendleton and the one he loved, clear in his mind. Then he slowly unbuttoned his watch-chain of braided hair, inserted the flat key in the lock of the little drawer above his inkstand, opened it, felt under a packet of letters tied with a narrow blue ribbon, and drew out a small leather daguerreotype case, unhooked it, and stood gazing at the portrait of the young girl it contained—a young girl in a checkered silk dress, with large, nervous black eyes, her dark hair falling in two soft curls over her neck, a red rose in her hair. He turned it askance to the light, bringing into clearer detail the delicate contour of the wistful face, the drooping, sensitive, melancholy mouth, the bit of lace at her throat, fastened by a brooch of garnets. Then he reverently returned it to the drawer, closed it, and locked it.

It did not, as Matilda had supposed, contain his money—only a memory.

While Enoch had been straightening out his room, Joe had been fidgeting this morning over his work in the office of Atwater & Grimsby, Architects, a modest square room on the third floor of an old brick building

in State Street, its two dingy lower floors being filled by Italian fruit merchants and the mingled perfume of the green banana, the orange, the lemon, and the fig. Joe this morning had accomplished nothing, his whole mind elated over Enoch Crane's invitation to tea and his promised glimpse of Sue. He drew, sprawled over his drawing-board, his pencil and T-square moving at a snail's pace as he counted the hours that remained before five, which the moon-faced clock, solemnly ticking over his head, appeared in no hurry to shorten; its punctilious hands seemed barely to move. He fussed for an hour over some rough ideas for a dormer window, spent another in searching through a book on early Tudor for a half-timbered inspiration, broke the point of his pencil constantly, and finally, with the memory of Sue's voice in his ears, upset a full bottle of India ink, its contents flooding the emerald-green water-color lawn in front of Mrs. Amos Jones's cottage destined for Dunehurst, changing it into a lake of indelible ink that found an outlet for itself over the edge of the drawing-board and went streaming to the floor. Sam Atwater's thin, alert face raised in disgust. He slid off his stool, readjusted his eyeglasses with his nervous hand, and regarded the ruin of Mrs. Amos Jones's water-colored country-seat in dismay.

"That's done for," said he gloomily.

"By the gods!" cried Joe, flinging up his strong arms in his enthusiasm. "Done for! Why, it's immense! It's a hummer, by Jove! Look at the value of black,

will you? Ripping! Cast your eyes on that contrast of trees and roof bang up against that ebony lake. Talk about values, picks up that little touch of apple-green on the roof and makes her sing. You wait until I get through with the next water-color. I've got a scheme, I tell you, that will make the rest of the boys sit up and blink. Why, black's the most valuable thing in the world, only you've got to have enough of it. We've been fooling around with a lot of timid shadows, afraid to smash in a big effect straight from the shoulder. Look at the value of that high light next to the strongest dark. That's one reason why Rembrandt's portraits look as if they could step out of the frame and shake you by the hand. Ruined! you sou marqué—it's a corker! Black—that's it, and plenty of it, with good, strong drawing and a big, splendid sky smashed in with Chinese white, raw umber, and French blue—I've got it, Sam. You wait. No more anæmic water-colors for me, and no more white paper, either. That's good enough for illustrators, but it's no good for architects. Give me gray paper—gauche—and charcoal—something you can build on."

Sam Atwater was studying him as he rattled on with the wide-eyed interest of a man listening to the secret of a new invention, which, although he did not wholly grasp its possibilities, nevertheless was slowly opening his eyes to its logical advantages.

"Gray paper—that's it!" cried Joe. "Cool gray for gray days, and a yellow gray for hot sunlight.

Can't you see, old man, that shadows are transparent and that everything else in hot sunlight is opaque?"

As no one had yet touched the ink-bottle, Joe kicked it into the corner.

"When is this miracle of yours going to happen?" asked Atwater, picking up the ruined water-color disconsolately and jamming it into the waste-paper basket.

"Happen!" exclaimed Joe. "Why—just as soon as I can draw well enough and can get used to handling gauche instead of the skimmed milk I've been using."

"You can draw well enough now, Joe," returned Atwater—"when you want to." He paused, grew a little red, half turned away, then wheeling around, added seriously: "See here, Joe, I'm not the nagging kind, and you know it—but—you know what we've got to do as well as I do, and the time that's left us to do it in. I'm doing my best to get the Jones job in before the 15th, specifications and all. Well—you don't seem to be getting on to the job lately, that's all. I—I hate to say this and—but, you see how it is, don't you? We've got to hustle—and there's another thing I might just as well say," he went on, clearing his throat and twirling his HB lead-pencil nervously in his active hand, a hand as precise as a machine, and as timid as a woman's. "You're not the same as you used to be—you've changed—you've got to dreaming —well—ever since the Fords moved in."

Joe gripped him heartily by both shoulders. "Good old Sammy," said he. "Oh, you're right—I don't

deny it. I'm goin' to brace up and help—and—and hustle. There—feel better?"

The clock above them struck twelve-thirty with a wheezy clang.

"Time to eat!" exclaimed Joe, with a persuasive twinkle. "Poor old Sammy! See here, what we need is food and a change of scene. What do you say to going to Old Tom's for luncheon—eh? It'll do you good—my treat, Sammy, and don't you dare say no, because if you do—" he grinned—"I'm going to pick you up and carry you there, if I have to walk up Broadway with you on my back. Is it a go?"

Sam hesitated. "Hadn't we better go back to the Pioneer Dairy," he ventured. "It's cheaper, Joe, and the stuff isn't so bad."

"It's abominable," protested Joe. "I'm tired of the kind that mother used to make. I've got enough of skimmed milk, I tell you, and seeing that sour old maid with the asthma pass the crullers. No, sir—what we want is some man's food and a good pint of ale in us—in a snug place that's alive."

He grabbed Atwater's derby from the hook next his own and jammed it on his studious head, wholly against Sam's ideas of right and wrong.

"Come along!" cried Joe, recovering his own broad-brimmed gray felt—a daily companion of his Beaux-Arts days, which had sheltered him through dozens of like little extravagances that his pocket always suffered for on the morrow. And so the two went off to old Tom's chop-house in Trinity Lane, where they had,

heeding the counsel of old Tom himself, a "combination" of spicy sausage, juicy chop, and a broiled kidney, sizzling hot, and done to a turn, that genial little Irishman in his shirt-sleeves further suggesting, with his habitual abbreviation of vegetables, a little "cel" and a little "spin" on the side, and two pints of his oldest ale, nearly as dark and powerful as Hartligan's oldest, next door, and with two cross-sections of hot mince pie to follow, "mince with a slip on," smothered under the best of Welsh rarebits, all of which in due time, as Tom had promised, were poked through the blackened worn hole connecting with the busy kitchen, and were devoured serenely, without as much as ruffling the digestion of youth.

"I feel better," declared Joe, and he looked it. So did Atwater, though he had broken a whole golden rule in regard to light luncheons and his duty to his drawing-board. He was also worrying about the pie.

"Let's have another," coaxed Joe, as he pinioned his last morsel of mince-meat, flaky pie-crust, and melted cheese nimbly on his steel fork and calmly raised it.

"Let's *what?*" exclaimed Atwater, aghast. "More of that pie? Not on your life. That stuff will put you on the Christmas tree if you get the habit."

"I'll split one with you," laughed Joe. "Come on, be a game sport."

"No, you won't," declared Atwater firmly.

"Now, Sammy; it's my fête day."

"You wait until you get the bill, and you'll think it's New Year's," remarked Atwater gravely.

"Ben Jonson and good old Falstaff would have been tickled to death with this place," enthused Joe, sipping his coffee and unheeding the anxious look in Atwater's eyes, as he ordered two light panetelas. "Nothing like good food for inspiration, old man. Hanged if I wouldn't like to have a tavern of my own —bumpers—trenchers, old beams, cobwebs, and troubadours, buxom lasses, a few captains of fortune with their ready blades, and the mail-coach due at one. Veiled lady getting out, assisted by his Grace the Duke. Dogs, minions, and stable-boys—small, fair-haired child running with bunch of posies for the Duke's lady, smiling Boniface in doorway with napkin. Steaming leaders stamping out of their trace-chains—and a fight in the back room——"

"Everything all right, gentlemen?" interrupted Tom, bringing the bill in his head and enumerating its items and total to Joe.

"I hope so," ventured Atwater meekly, his mind still dwelling on the pie, as Joe laid his last spare ten-dollar bill on the table, received four dollars and ten cents back in change, shook the genial Irishman by the hand, who boasted he had never been out of New York, and when he wanted a breath of sea air went to the Battery, complimented him upon his cuisine, and thanked him for the good luncheon—all with so much cheery good-humor, that Tom followed them both out to the door, and over its sawdusted

threshold, to send them off with a final wave of the hand.

Joe Grimsby was the first to arrive.

Whatever glimpse he was to get of Sue this afternoon he wished to prolong as much as possible. In fact, he sprang up Enoch's stairs as early as half past four, heralding his presence by a hearty "Hello!" that brought Enoch out to his landing.

"I'm early, I know, but then I didn't want to be late," he explained with a frank laugh, as Enoch welcomed him with both hands and ushered him into his room.

Joe flung himself into the proffered armchair and glanced about him.

"By thunder!" he cried. "What a nice old room."

"It's comfortable, my boy," returned Enoch, studying his well-knit figure and his splendid chest, his keen eyes observing the well-bred ease with which Joe made himself instantly at home. He had changed his office suit for a soft, light-gray homespun—its double-breasted high-cut waistcoat, the flamboyant black silk bow cravat, and the low, turned-down collar, allowing plenty of play to his strong, ruddy throat, giving him a slightly foreign air, which Enoch rightly decided was the result of his Paris student days in the Latin Quarter, where Joe had lived out four eminently respectable years, made a good record at the Beaux-Arts, plenty of friends, and no *liaisons*. So that when he left there was no good, faithful little "Marcelle" or

"Yvette" to shed tears over his going, and all he had to do was to call a fiacre, shoulder his trunk, chuck it on top, say again good-by to his old *concierge*, Madame Dupuy, and to the red-faced *cocher* awaiting his order—"Gare St. Lazare." It seems almost a pity that there was no little Yvonne or Marie to accompany him to the station. Ah, how brave they are! And when one's heart is big so that it chokes one it is not easy to be brave—none to have packed his things and bought his ticket in her perfect French, and put a kiss between the sandwiches, and deposited more right before the accustomed eyes of the important red-faced *chef de gare*, until the tragic, relentless bleat of his horn sent the long-dreaded express to Havre moving swiftly out of the station. Joe had come out of it all as straight as a T-square.

"So you like the old room?" said Enoch, opening a thin box of fat cigarettes.

"Ripping old room," Joe declared. "I've never known a room that didn't have a personality—good, bad, or indifferent. Some rooms seem almost to speak to you."

"Or, rather, they reflect the personality of the occupant," said Enoch. "Some rooms reflect deeper than mirrors, my boy. They give out to you much of the true character of the person whom they shelter. They're as much a part of them as their minds and manner of life."

"Look at the charm of this old place—its friendliness, the way it hangs together!" Joe went on. He

was bordering unconsciously on a compliment, Enoch swerving it with:

"Take, on the other hand, for instance, in your profession. There is nothing more ridiculous and incongruous to me than the houses some people live in. Some of you architects design salons and dining-rooms for people who would be far more at their ease in the kitchen. Imagine a boudoir with a Madame Récamier lounge for a woman's rights delegate—a library for a grocer, and a ballroom for an undertaker, and you have my idea," grinned Enoch.

"You ought to see the bedroom I've designed for Mrs. Amos Jones," Joe declared. "She's daft on Marie Antoinette ever since she saw the Petit Trianon last summer and bought the postal cards."

Enoch broke out into a hearty laugh.

"I've got baa-lambs in blue bows and shepherdesses with golden crooks," confessed Joe, "stencilled all over the frieze, and the royal crown made by a cabinet-maker in Hoboken over her canopied bed. Atwater was furious, but Mrs. Jones would have it."

Enoch roared.

"That's it," said he. "I can see it all. What a lot of fools some women are."

"Ever seen Mrs. Amos Jones?" Joe ventured.

"No," grinned Enoch, "but I can imagine her."

"No, you can't," chuckled Joe, as Matilda passed through the room to open the door for the Fords, and hurried back a second later to reopen it for the Misses Moulton.

And what a tea it was! How pretty Sue looked, and how good were the hot little muffins Matilda had prepared as a surprise, which old Moses served with silent dignity in his best alpaca coat and white cotton gloves. And how "darling" Sue thought Matilda's exquisite little cups, into which Miss Ann poured tea with the grace and gentleness of a lady.

The old room had never heard so much talk before, so much neighborly good-humor, broken at intervals by Ebner Ford's somewhat raw and insistent attempts to engage the others in listening to the beginning of one of his many anecdotes—all of which Mrs. Ford had heard a thousand times, and which generally ended apropos of business, but which did not deter that effusive lady from referring as usual to her famous Southern family, of course apropos of the muffins, which she naïvely led up to.

"Now, when I was a girl," she beamed, "I remember so well our delicious Southern hot breads—our table fairly groaned with them, Mr. Crane. We were five sisters, you know. Well, of course, our house was always full of company, father being so prominent in the place. I shall never forget how furious father was at an old beau of mine for taking me driving in the phaeton without his permission," simpered the rotund little woman. "You see, we were young girls and, if I do say it, we had a great many young men at the house constantly, and, of course, when father became judge. . . ."

"Yo heah all day hiferlutin' talk," whispered Ma-

tilda to Moses in the bedroom, transformed for the occasion into a serving-pantry. "I'se never heerd no real quality yit a talkin' 'bout dere family. Dey don't have to. Eve'ybody knows what dey is when dey looks at em."

There were two young people in two chairs by the window in the fast-growing twilight, whom Enoch skilfully managed to leave by themselves.

"And you forgive me?" ventured Joe, looking up into her frank blue eyes.

"Why, I haven't anything to forgive you for," laughed Sue nervously. "Only it did seem a little queer—your—your inviting me so suddenly."

"But you will forgive me, won't you? You don't know how much I've thought about it, and how much I cared. Then when we met on the stairs that day and you seemed so cold—half afraid of me. Tell me you're not afraid of me now, are you?"

A deeper color spread slowly to her cheeks.

"Why, no; I'm not afraid. I was foolish, I suppose," Sue added half audibly, with lowered eyelids, clasping her hands nervously in her lap.

The dusk of evening came on apace; they forgot the chatter in the old room.

Joe leaned toward her.

"I wish we *could* be friends," said he, regarding her small, nervous hands longingly. "Real friends, I mean —that is, if you'll trust me?" She glanced up at him quickly, her gaze as quickly reverting to her lap. Then, with a forced little shrug of her pretty shoulders:

"Why, yes; of course I'll trust you, Mr. Grimsby."

Impulsively he touched her warm little hand.

"Honest?" he smiled, thrilled by that touch from his head to his feet. "Honest Injun? Cross your heart?"

"I said I would," she said evenly.

Their eyes met—his with a happy gleam in them, hers with a timid, tender look, her heart beating until she felt its throb in her ears.

"I fear we had better be going," she said, making a little movement to rise. "I'm afraid it's awfully late."

Joe snapped out his watch, bending closer to the window, where he ascertained it lacked a few minutes past six.

"You can stay a little longer, can't you?" he pleaded. "Now that we're to be good friends."

"It's on account of mother," she replied evasively, catching the tone of Mrs. Ford's voice which had risen to that shrill key which invariably accompanied her leave-taking—a moment in which she again referred beamingly to Lamont, who had been kindness itself, she had heard, to Mrs. Van Cortlandt, "all through that awful tragedy, my dear," she explained to Miss Jane Moulton, who had scarcely opened her lips. "He's kind to every one," she went on effusively. "You should see the beautiful roses he sent me only yesterday—two dozen of the most gorgeous American Beauties. I was *so* surprised—as I told daughter. . . ."

Her words nettled Joe, and he turned sharply.

Enoch struck a match savagely under the mantelpiece and lighted the Argand burner.

"Oh, please don't!" protested Sue. "I do love the twilight so, Mr. Crane."

"Then you shall have it, my dear," returned Enoch. "I wonder if you'll do me a favor. Will you sing to us—in that twilight you love? Just a little song, any you please. I'm sorry there's no piano. Come, won't you?"

"Please," pleaded Joe.

"Why, yes; of course I will if you wish it, Mr. Crane," consented Sue. "Let me see—what shall I sing?"

"That ravishing little thing from—'Aïda'—isn't it, darling?—the one with the fascinating warbles," suggested her mother. "She has another one that's too cute for words," she confided to Miss Jane. "I'll get her to sing it."

Sue started to rise. Enoch raised his hand.

"Pray don't get up," he begged. "Sit where you are, dear, and sing me the 'Old Kentucky Home.'"

The room grew hushed. Two dark forms filled the narrow doorway of the bedroom. Enoch slipped into his favorite chair, his chin sunk deep in the palm of his hand. Then Sue began. The old song poured forth from her pure young throat clear and plaintive, in all the simple beauty of its words and melody. Matilda's lips moved. At the third verse something seemed to be strangling her; unseen in the dusk, she buried her black, tear-stained face in her hands, Moses comforting her in whispers.

Joe sat beside the singer in the dusk—immovable—in a dream. Beneath his hand lay Sue's—warm, tender, unresisting. Thus ended the song—as if it were the most natural thing in the world for songs to end that way.

CHAPTER X

Miss Jane had gone out. She had taken her purple parasol with her to Stuyvesant Square, where the sun this March afternoon glistened on its faded fringe, and sent the saucy brown sparrows to doze and preen their wings in the bare branches of the trees, Miss Jane finding protection for her frail person back of the iron fence on a hard bench, its thin, cast-iron arms polished by the weary, the worthless, and the poor. Sometimes she sat in the corner, looking out upon the passing life of the street, though she much preferred the bench beside the struggling geraniums and begonias when the sun shone. She had taken with her as well, secreted in the depths of her black-silk reticule, a small volume of Lowell's verses—some of them she knew by heart, and those she did not helped her to forget her cough.

There were a lot of things tucked away for safe-keeping in that reticule of Miss Jane's: Old addresses of cheaper seamstresses which might some day be needed, a spool of sewing silk and a needle, in case of accidents; her name and address written plainly by Miss Ann; three old prescriptions that, alas! were always being renewed, and clippings from the New York *Observer* on sermons she had missed, stuck to licorice drops—all these did not hinder her thin fingers

from finding a hidden cracker for the sparrows, which she fed them in tiny bits under the alcoholic eye of a well-to-do Tammany policeman with park manners, who always saluted her respectfully.

Miss Jane was so reticent in public that she rarely opened her lips, total strangers like car-conductors and new church-sextons being an unavoidable exception. She took up but little space in the world, and was of no more hinderance to others than her own shadow—and yet she was a woman, had once been a girl, and once a baby. There is a degree of modesty which becomes conspicuous. It is almost impossible to conceive that Miss Jane had ever loved; that she had ever laughed, or felt the pain of happiness; that coquetry had once peeped mischievously from the corners of her eyes, playing hide-and-seek with her smile —a smile that once had made more than one young man's heart beat the faster—all that was dry and dead.

There were other withered leaves in the park.

And so Miss Jane had gone out. In fact, there was nobody left in the house but Miss Ann, Ebner Ford, Matilda, and the cat, Moses having crossed the ferry to his savings-bank in Brooklyn, a suburb noted for its savings.

Ebner Ford waited until Miss Jane had timidly passed his door on her way out. Then he hurriedly shaved, put on his best suit of clothes, selected a fresh white tie, doused some of his wife's lavender perfume on a clean handkerchief, and leaped up the stairs to Miss Ann's door, which she had unfortunately left ajar.

She was darning her sister's stockings when he knocked, and had barely time to hide them and seize her knitting before he thrust his head in with an ingratiating grin.

"Got so pesky lonesome down-stairs, thought I'd just come up and cheer you up," he blurted out, unheeding her embarrassment. "Hope I'm not intrudin' —Emma's gone with girlie to a show. Grand day, ain't it, Miss Moulton?"

He had safely gained the centre of the room, an old trick with him in business interviews; doors marked "Private" or "No admission" had no terrors for Ford.

Miss Ann had sprung out of her chair by her sewing-table and stood helpless before him, flushed.

"And so you were left alone, Mr. Ford," she said bravely, with dignified resignation.

"That's about the size of it," he laughed, selecting the sofa, and crossing his long legs, his head thrown back at his ease, as she reseated herself before him. "I'm not much on goin' to shows," he declared. "Seen too much of 'em. There wa'n't a troupe that come to our town when I was a boy but what I'd tag after 'em and see 'em perform. Since I've had so many business cares I've kinder gotten out of goin' to the theatre. S'pose you're pretty crazy about 'em, Miss Moulton, ain't you? Most women are."

"I've never been to the theatre," confessed Miss Ann quietly, her eyes upon her knitting.

He shot forward with a surprised smile, gripping his bony knees with his long hands.

"Well, say, that beats me!" he cried.

"Neither my mother nor my father approved of the theatre; my sister and I have never gone," she added simply. "We were brought up differently, I suppose."

"You ain't missed such an awful lot," he returned, by way of consolation. "I've seen some shows where you got your money's worth; then, again, I've seen 'em that wa'n't worth twenty-five cents—your pa and ma didn't have nothin' agin the circus, did they?"

Miss Ann looked at him, with pinched lips and a hesitant smile. "Perhaps we'd better not discuss it," said she. "I'm afraid our views are so different, you see. To be frank with you, Mr. Ford, the people of the stage have never attracted me—when you consider their lives, their—their——"

"Don't you tell Emma," he intervened, paused, and added confidentially: "But I knew an actress once—finest little woman you ever see, Miss Moulton."

The needles in her frail, active hands flew nervously.

"Wished I could remember her name—hold on, I got it. Nell Little. 'Little Nell,' I used to call her. Come up with a show from Troy and took sick at the Eagle House. Had a small dog with her, I remember—one er them shiverin', tinklin', black-and-tans. Nell thought an awful lot of that little cuss. Seems he'd saved her life once in a smash-up on the Delaware and Lackawanna; led them that was searchin' for her into a burnin' sleeper. Well, when she took sick at the Eagle House, and the rest of 'em had to leave her—no, hold on, I'm gettin' ahead of my story."

The trembling needles dropped a stitch.

"It was Ed Stimson that come to me—that's it. Ed bought the Eagle House from old Bill Williams's widder, and Ed and me was pretty close pardners in them days. 'Ebner,' says he, 'Doc Rand claims number nine's got the pneumonia. She's been out of her head since daylight. She's been askin' for you. Guess you're elected, Eb.'"

He rambled on, unconscious that every word he uttered was far from welcome to his listener, who sat before him helpless, dazed, and indignant, unable to stem the tide of his worldly narrative. He enlightened her to the fact that he and Little Nell had had supper together only two days before in an oyster-parlor of a friend of his. He insisted that she had taken a shine to him from the first, and that now that she was ill and penniless in the Eagle House, the only decent thing he could do was to pay the doctor and her board bill, dilating on the detail that he was human and incapable of seeing any woman in distress, without coming to her aid like a gentleman, and ended this remarkable résumé by flinging himself back on the sofa with a satisfied smile, stretching his lean jaws in a yawn, as if the incident was only one of many in his wide experience.

"Warm, ain't it—for March?" he declared, breaking the awkward silence that ensued.

Miss Ann agreed that it was, the needles slowing down to their normal speed.

"It ain't a mite too warm for me," he remarked, displaying a thick and drooping sock above his cracked

patent-leather shoes. "Warm weather means plenty of business in the laundry line, Miss Moulton. A feller can get along all right in cold weather, but take it in collar-meltin' time and clean shirts are a necessity. Ever stop to think how many percales and fancy madrases are spoiled by cheap wringers? Chewed to holes 'fore the iron touches 'em."

Miss Ann laid her knitting in her lap in forced attention. Something far graver than his visit had worried her to-day, a question of money, a discouraging letter from her brother, which she had kept from her sister, not having the heart to tell her that some property she had counted on to relieve their present modest income had turned out a failure.

"I don't mind tellin' you, Miss Moulton, a little secret," continued Ford, "seein' we're old friends and neighbors. It's sort of lettin' the cat out of the bag," he added thoughtfully, "but I've been thinkin' it over, neighbor; besides, I don't know anybody I'd rather help than you," he declared, as he fished in his pocket and drew out a square chunk of dark rubber.

"That's pure Para," he announced gravely, holding it up for her inspection. "Take a good look at it, Miss Moulton; you don't often see it. It ain't worth its weight in gold, but it's close to it when it comes to wringers. It's them cheap rollers that does the dirty work. If you was to know what they're made of, I presume likely you wouldn't care to wear the clothes they come through. It's the sulphur in 'em that does the stainin'."

Again his long hand fumbled in his pocket; this time it drew out a folded paper with a mechanical drawing, a model of a clothes-wringer, which he spread out flat on his knees.

"There she is," he declared with conviction. "Looks pretty neat, don't it? That there layer of pure Para on the rollers does the trick, and them two extra cog-wheels on the speed-accelerator keeps her movin', I kin tell you. Saves time! One turn of that crank's worth ten of any other household wringer on the market. Can't jam, can't squeeze, can't rust, every nut, screw, and rivet in it galvanized. Even pressure on anything from a lady's handkerchief to a baby's bib. Got any idea, friend, what it costs delivered to sufferin' humanity? Four dollars. Got any idea what it makes?"

"I haven't an idea," confessed Miss Ann, looking up, relieved at the sudden and cleanly change in the conversation, and, despite herself, becoming more and more interested.

"'Course you haven't, Miss Moulton. Be a little surprised, wouldn't you, if I was to tell you that old Mrs. Miggs, one of our stockholders, doubled her income; that she's got already a couple of thousand dollars laid aside for a rainy day that she'd never had if I hadn't come to her in a friendly way. I don't know as if I've ever seen a woman happier. Her mortgage on her house in Yonkers all paid up, nice little new home for herself and niece, and a tidy little sum in the bank—a sum that's growin' daily, friend, without so

much as liftin' her little finger. As our head canvasser on the road wrote me yesterday, a man of over twenty years' experience sellin' wringers—'You needn't worry no more,' he writes, 'about the Household Gem holdin' her own; I'm averagin' two gross a week right here in Elmira. I could sell three if I had 'em.' Hold on. I've got it, if I ain't mistaken." He whipped out the letter and read it aloud, including its postscript.

"You should see the pleased faces on Mondays—women who have never had an easy wash-day before in their lives. The new ad: 'Let baby do the work,' catches 'em. Hoping your folks are well,

"Yours successfully,

"E. P. REDMOND,

"*Managing Salesman of The United Family Laundry Association, Limited.*"

He thrust the letter back in his pocket and waited for its effect, beating a tattoo on the arm of the sofa, and though Miss Ann did not reply, the nervous way she dropped her stitches assured him he had made an impression.

"Anybody, my friend, with a little ready money, can double it," he resumed persuasively. "Just as sure as two and two makes four. Take Mrs. Miggs, for instance. Six months ago she was skimpin' along as usual—always ailin', too—worry done that, as I told her, worry; not knowin' how she was goin' to end one month and begin another. Lookin' sallower'n a peck of mustard—no appetite—worry—and what for?

Kept what little money she had in her bank, afraid to invest a dollar of it in anything. Let it lay there in cold storage without givin' her a cent of interest. Spendin' little by little her capital without a dollar of it free to make another. 'Twa'n't right, and I told her so plainly. It's all she had, she told me. It'll be all you'll ever get, I told her, if you keep on leaving it in jail. Any dollar, my dear friend, that ain't worth more than a dollar, that can't make a cent for itself, is a pretty shiftless greenback, and ought to be ashamed to look its owner in the face. Give every dollar a show. That's common sense, ain't it?"

He shot out a frayed cuff and slapped his knee soundly.

"I ain't the kind to believe in speculatin', 'specially for women. They wa'n't never made to handle the heavy risks that men are. They ain't capable of shoulderin' the enormous responsibilities that we have to. How many women have come to me, beggin' me to invest their money in speculations that I've refused. Funny, ain't it, how some women like to gamble? That's all speculatin' is—gamblin'. Gamblin's agin my principles, friend, and always was. There ain't no righteousness in gamblin'. It's an ungodly sin, worse vice'n the liquor habit. Our gains, says the Bible, is to be measured by the sweat of our brows. Honest business means hard toil and sound judgment. Why, I've seen times when if it hadn't been for my sound judgment—business acumen, they call it—I'd been a ruined man. Sellin' honest goods ain't got nothin' to do with

gamblin'. Sellin' somethin' that folks need—honestly made and honestly sold; that folks who have paid for it and used it swear by. An article that enters the home circle as a helpin' hand; that makes the home happier, and keeps the doctor from the door. No more backaches for mother; a child can turn the handle of the Gem. The accelerator tends to that. Easy as a fish-reel, friction down to the minimum. Any wonder that it sells? As our Southern agent wrote us the other day: 'It wrings out the dollars, as easy as it does a heavy day's wash.'"

He laughed softly.

"Yes; it's given the wringer trade a tough blow—patents all covered. There ain't an inch of it they kin imitate. When men like Hiram Sudwell, president of the National Mangle Company, come sniffin' round to buy," he chuckled. "'Sudwell,' I says to him, 'you ain't got money enough if you was to pile it as high as the ceilin' to buy the Gem.' He sorter laughed. He knowed there wa'n't no use.

"'Couldn't you let me in a little on the ground floor?' says he. 'How about lettin' me have ten thousand shares of your preferred? If it's a go here's my check for it,' says he. I let him talk. I see he was lookin' kind er down in the mouth. Bimeby he begun to coax an' whine. 'See here,' says he, 'there ain't no use 'n our hemmin' and hawin' round the bush. I'm plain-spoken. The Gem's a gold mine, and you know it. Tell you what I'll do,' says he; 'if you'll let me have ten thousand spot cash, I'll throw in five hundred of

the Mangle's preferred just to show there's no hard feelin'.' 'Sudwell,' says I, 'we ain't sellin' stock to rival companies. First thing you know you'd want more. Next thing we'd know you'd have us out in the cold. . . .'"

Miss Ann had risen. She laid her knitting with a trembling hand in her work-basket, went over to the window and stood there gazing out, struggling with herself over a decision so stupendous to that conservative little woman, that every quivering nerve in her was strung to its utmost. As she stood by the window she seemed to be praying.

Suddenly she turned to him, her hands clasped behind her, her eyes downcast, one small foot slightly advanced toward a step that even then made her tremble, her mind filled with doubt, that forerunner of hasty decision.

"I'm going to speak to you very frankly," she said, in a voice whose strange weakness belied its courage. "My sister, as you know, is ill. She has been ill nearly all her life, Mr. Ford. We are neither of us young; what little money is ours I have always tried to manage for the best. It is I who have always taken the responsibility of this, and it is I who must continue to do it. I have no one to come to, either for counsel or advice, neither for protection. I tell you this frankly, for I want you to feel it and understand it. Had my sister and I all that is rightly due us, we should be in far different circumstances."

She raised her eyes bravely.

"My sister needs comforts, I mean real comforts, Mr. Ford, comforts I have not dared risk the giving. A purer air than New York, long summers in some pleasant country place, more luxuries than I feel we can afford and live within our means, and people around her who would take her mind from herself. You may not realize it, but far from growing better, she is growing worse. I, who am constantly with her, see it only too plainly. Her extreme weakness at times frightens me. Now what I feel is this——"

Ford started, his shrewd eyes alert to her slightest word or gesture.

"If it were possible to invest safely, as you say, even the small amount that I could dare give you—it is so serious, Mr. Ford, you *must* understand just how I feel. If I were to give you this—and anything should happen to it——"

Ebner Ford sprang to his feet.

"Can you doubt it," he exclaimed earnestly, "in the face of plain figgers? You don't suppose, my dear friend, I'd lead you into a risk, do you?"

"I don't believe you would, sir," said she. "That would be too cruel."

He drove his thumbs into his armholes, and for a moment stood in thought, tapping his fancy waistcoat with his long, bony fingers.

"Suppose I let you have a thousand shares?" he said with a benign smile. "Think what it would mean to you. No more worryin' over little things; you'll have money enough then to have some peace of mind."

"I've had so little," she said with a saddened smile, "that it would be most welcome, I assure you. How much are the shares?" she asked timidly. "I know so little about such matters."

"Preferred?" he questioned briskly, elevating his eyebrows. "They pay you considerable more, you know, than the common stock."

"I'd like the best;" said she, "that is, if I can afford it."

"That's right," said he. "It always pays to git the best. The best always pays in the end. There wa'n't never yit a couple of cheap things worth one good one. I'd like to see yer git the best—somethin' you'd be proud of ownin', like our gilt-edged preferred." He rammed his long hands in his trousers pockets, and for some seconds paced slowly before her, lost in thought. "Let's see—let's see," he muttered.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said suddenly. "Let us say fifteen hundred shares preferred. I'll waive what they're worth to-day. I'll let you have 'em at par, my friend, at ten dollars a share, cash. That'll make it an even fifteen thousand dollars. You deserve it, Miss Moulton, if ever any woman did," he cried magnanimously. "I'd give a good deal to see old Hiram Sudwell in your shoes right now."

"But fifteen thousand dollars" gasped the little spinster, "is half of all we've got in the world, Mr. Ford!"

"I see," said he gravely.

She started to speak, but he waved his hand.

"Hold on," he resumed cheerfully. "We'll do better than that," and again he paced before her. "I'm the last man in the world to ask anybody to put all their eggs in the same basket. Suppose we say half that amount?" He saw her hesitate, nervously fingering the long, thin gold chain that circled her neck, and which all her life had served her as guardian of her mother's watch.

"I say half," said he, breaking the silence. "Why, you'll think nothin' of buyin' the rest of that fifteen hundred with what you'll make on that half."

"And you advise it?" she ventured. He assured her without speaking, his expression one of kindly approval, unvarnished, without a vestige of a doubt. "That would be seven thousand, five hundred dollars, wouldn't it?" she inquired, still struggling with herself.

"There ain't no use of my advisin' less to you," he declared. "It wouldn't be worth your botherin' about. I'd like to see you happy—real happy. You needn't thank me now, but you'll thank me some day, my friend. You won't never regret it."

"I—I feel so alone—so helpless," she returned, "as if I really ought to think it all seriously over; would you mind letting me do that? I'd feel better, I think."

"That's just what Mrs. Miggs said to me. Now look at her. Do you suppose Mrs. Miggs has ever regretted it? Her little nest-egg beginnin' from the very day she bought her shares; woke up the next mornin' knowin' her troubles were over. Took her

little niece straight down to Stewart's and bought her a new outfit from head to toe. Suppose she'd er waited? I want to see you happy, friend. I want that there happiness to begin *now—to-day.*" He put forth his hand to her, forcing her own small hand into its grasp, where it lay as frightened as a wren with a broken wing.

"Perhaps, then, I'd better decide," she breathed, with a beating heart, gazing at the floor.

"That's right!" he cried. "That's the right kind of talk. I know sich matters are hard to think over, and decide. But we've done the thinkin' and we've done the decidin,' ain't we? And all them gnawin' little doubts is over."

"Yes," she said, looking up at him quickly, and withdrawing her hand, a strange new courage in her eyes. "I *have* decided, Mr. Ford. I will take the seven thousand five hundred dollars' worth of shares."

In precisely seven minutes by Ebner Ford's watch Miss Ann Moulton became the sole possessor of seven hundred and fifty shares of the Household Gem, preferred, and its receipt, and before the ink was fairly dry on her check it was tucked in Ford's portfolio next to a five-dollar bill that his stepdaughter had loaned him that morning. He had feared the sister's return. He had had experience with two women deciding together. It was while he was engaged in exploiting the millions contained in a vast hen industry in the Far West destined to supply half the eggs to the world—at bottom prices—the army of A No. 1 Leghorn layers

being fed on imitation corn made by a secret process, producing the best cold-storage egg on the market.

He had hardly reached his room before Miss Jane's key opened the front door. He stood screened back of his own ajar, listening to her as she wearily climbed the stairs, her purple parasol aiding her, stopping on the landings for breath. It still lacked twenty minutes before his bank in Union Square closed at three. In less than fifteen he had handed over to its silent but astonished receiving teller, for deposit, a check for more money than he had ever had to his credit in his life.

This done, he walked briskly over to the Everitt House, and through a swing-door smelling of lemons and old Bourbon sours, feeling a good deal richer than Hiram Sudwell, and of much more importance in the world than the President of the United States. The bartender noticed the change in him at a glance. He seemed younger, more at his ease. There was already a certain indescribable air of geniality and prosperity about his customer that sent the bartender's quick hand over the bottle of "ordinary" and on to the "special," hesitated, and settled over the neck of the decanter of "private stock," which he produced with a clean doily and a smile of welcome.

"Warm for March—ain't it?" remarked Ford, pouring out for himself a stiff drink.

"It sure is a grand day," returned the bartender. "Ain't seen you around lately, mister—er—busy, I suppose, as usual—well, that's the way to be."

"Busy," declared Ford. "Ain't had time to eat."

Then he paid for his drink, recounted the fifty dollars in new bills he had drawn, called a cab and went off to Koster & Bial's, where he managed to secure, late as it was for the matinée, his favorite seat at a front-row table.

It was only when Miss Jane reached her room and learned the story from her sister's lips that she realized their great good fortune. For some moments Miss Ann held her in her arms, petting her like a child.

"I felt it was for the best, dear," she kept repeating. They both wept a little; all the worry was over now, her sister assured her. Miss Jane seemed dazed. She could not fully realize it. She sat on the edge of her bed, smiling through the tears, smoothing Miss Ann's hand. Then they set about making plans for the summer. They decided on Lake Mohonk. Finally, exhausted as she was, Miss Jane went to bed, Miss Ann waiting until she fell asleep before straightening out their meagre accounts of the week before, some of whose items had frightened her, especially the druggist's bill which had come in the morning's mail with that hopeless letter from her brother. They were nothing now—new hope, new courage had entered her heart.

CHAPTER XI

Now it happened that Sue had come in fresh and rosy from a walk, glowing with health this fine April afternoon, and had brought Pierre Lamont home with her. There is no secret about where she found him, nothing could have been more public or more innocent than their chance meeting on Fifth Avenue before the Reservoir, that solid and dignified monument with its wavy covering of ivy, which Joe considered the most impressive mass of stone in the city, with Bryant Park as its back yard, and enough Croton water soundly held within its four solemn Egyptian walls to have satisfied the most rabid of teetotalers, and before which Lamont's patent-leather shoes and English buff-colored spats shone resplendently almost every afternoon between four and five. Indeed, he was so familiar a figure on Fifth Avenue, that his absence was noticed by many whose daily habit it was to see and be seen along the city's most fashionable highway. More than one man noted in passing the cut and pattern of Lamont's clothes before ordering his own. And though, unlike Beau Brummel, he did not actually set the fashion, they could rest assured that everything he wore was of the latest. The newest derby was his the day after it appeared in the window of

the best hatter. He was a connoisseur as well in gloves and walking-sticks. He was said to pay a formidable price for his clothes, and they were conspicuous in return for their smartness and good taste. At least he dressed like a thoroughbred and a gentleman, and his ease and good looks carried him along triumphantly through many an escapade.

Like Bompard, that idle Norman of Maupassant's, Lamont "was born with an unbelievable aptitude to do nothing, and an immoderate desire never to disturb that vocation." This, however, did not prevent him from amusing himself, or of taking a flier on rising stocks, or the races now and then, with his wife's money. It is safe to say, he worked harder in amusing himself than any other New Yorker of his time, and since there is no more strenuous existence than the daily pursuit of pleasure, no wonder that the silver touch to his temples was whiter for his years than most men's, though even at thirty-five he had the clean-cut, bronzed complexion of a boy and the hands of a nobleman. Had Jean Valjean encountered him, he would have given him some sound advice; he would have said to him, as he did to Montparnasse: "Some day you will see others afar off working in the fields, and they will seem to you to be resting." A counsel that clever footpad and criminal jeered at while the old ex-convict held him by the collar—quite as Lamont would have jeered—for every gentleman's ways are his own, are they not?—and of no one else's business.

Lamont knew Fifth Avenue as well as any man could

know it, and as there is always one popular side to every thoroughfare, he chose that flanking the Reservoir, his promenade carrying him as far up as the Fifth Avenue Church, and as far down as the Hotel Brunswick, which he invariably crossed over to for a cocktail and a look over the coach horses, and where often several people from London of his acquaintance were stopping.

Any one with half an eye could have seen how frequently society women whom he knew stopped to greet him. He made a tall, handsome figure as he bent over them, chatting about the dinner of the night before, or the cotillon, or the play, or the new lot of débutantes. They thought him fascinating—and he was. When a woman spoke to him, she spoke directly into his brilliant black eyes. In her presence he was always in a state of irrepressible good-humor, agreeing with her in everything, and skilful enough, you may be sure, never to criticise her rival. That he forced a would-be friendly smile from others, in passing, of no acquaintance whatsoever, was purely his own affair—and theirs. He always knew what to say instantly, no matter who she was, or where he imagined they had last met. No Italian could have been more gallant, and no Frenchman more courteous or experienced.

He had seen Sue's trim, slender little figure ahead of him step from the overcrowded stage, gain the sidewalk, and turn rapidly down Fifth Avenue. Instantly he quickened his pace, drawing up to her, Sue uncon-

scious that he was following her, until he smilingly lifted his hat.

"Hello, little playmate!" he laughed. "And where are *you* going, pray tell?" Sue started and turned.

"Why, Mr. Lamont! Why, I'm going home," said she. "Isn't it a glorious day! The stage was so noisy and stuffy I couldn't stand it any longer. I just had to get out and walk."

"Home," he ventured, with the vestige of a sigh. "May I come?"

"Why—why, yes, of course you may," she laughed back, "if you'd really like to," swept off her feet by their sudden meeting and his quick proposal.

"Like to!" he smiled. "If you only knew how good you are to ask me. I'm so wretchedly lonely to-day."

"Now, Mr. Lamont, that's a fib and you know it. You don't mean to tell me you're lonely on a day like this? It's too glorious. Did you ever see such a sky?"

"I hadn't noticed it," he confessed, slipping deftly to her left side. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed, looking up. "Marvellous! It's blue, *isn't* it?"

"You didn't think it was green, did you, like the moon? They say it's really made of green cheese," she laughed mischievously. "Isn't it just the most adorable blue? Don't you think New York skies are wonderful? Didn't you ever wish you were a swallow, and could go skimming about in that exquisite space? Think of it."

"But I don't want to be a swallow," said he, swinging

his stick. "I cannot imagine anything more deadly dull than being a swallow. I enjoy my flights of imagination much more, I assure you. How well you look."

She glanced up at him with an embarrassed little smile, her pretty teeth gleaming whiter than the single small pearl at her throat.

"It's wonderful how New York agrees with you," he declared, as they strode on past the white marble balustrade of the Stewart mansion, his eyes taking in at their ease the dimples in her rosy cheeks, and the full color of her lips. "Do you know there're lots of girls here who'd give anything for your color. They're faded out, poor little dears, with too much rich food and dancing; never get to bed until morning, and seldom out of it until noon. I never give a débutante more than six months to look as old as her chaperon."

"I think we'd better cross here," she said, as they reached Madison Square; "it's shorter."

"Careful," said he.

His hand grasped her soft arm tenderly. She felt his strength as he guided her firmly between the passing carriages, his grip relaxing again to a gentle pressure that was almost a caress as they reached the opposite curbstone in safety.

"Thank you," said she, a little flushed. His lighter prattle had subsided. On their way through the square they fell quickly into their bond of common sympathy—music—of which he knew and talked as fluently as a professional—a wider knowledge sadly lacking in Joe, whose limitations were confined to the

tunes he could whistle. He filled her eager ears with a host of interesting remarks about the true value of the diminished seventh, explaining to her how it was often overdone meaninglessly, like many pyrotechnic displays in chromatic scales meant to *épater* the audience, and which no sane composer would think of letting run riot in his orchestration. "Meaningless pads," he called them, and Sue clearly understood. By the time they had cut through Fourth Avenue and Union Square, he had explained to her the difference between the weird, cold harmonies of Grieg and the subtler passion of Chopin, carrying her on to the orchestral effects of Tschaikowsky, and how he produced them. Then in lighter vein he spoke of Planquette and his merry "Chimes of Normandy," and of Planquette's snug little villa among his pines and flower-beds on the Norman French coast, which he had been to and had had many a good day's shooting from Planquette's snipe-blind close by on the dune, in ear-shot of his piano—of what a genial host he was.

Sue strolled on by his side, absorbed as a child in the midst of a fairy-tale. By the time they reached Waverly Place, she had had the most delightful walk of her life. "How could he ever be lonely," she thought, "with all those memories? Why had he not told her more of them before?" She began to feel sorry for her treatment of him that brilliant tragic evening at the Van Cortlandts', and almost confessed it to him as they went up the stoop together and she opened the dingy black walnut door with its ground-

glass panels, one of which depicted Fortune hugging a dusty sheaf of wheat, and the other, Mercury in full flight through a firmament of sand-blasted clouds. He followed her up the stairs. Nothing escaped him, neither the mat which Ebner Ford had placed himself in front of his threshold, with a deep "Welcome" branded on it in red letters, or the Rogers group which Mrs. Ford had generously given to the niche in the hallway, and which portrayed a putty-colored father reading the evening paper to the spellbound delight of his wife and five putty-colored children.

Mrs. Ford, who had just put her hat on and caught sight of them as they came up the stoop, rushed instantly to the piano; she flew at the most difficult part of her chef-d'œuvre, "The Storming of Sebastopol," with a will, as if nothing had happened, as if Mr. Pierre Lamont was not only then actually ascending the stairs to her door, if he had not already reached it; whereas the delighted expectancy of that lady was so intense, that she mistook the loud pedal for the soft, opening a broadside from the English fleet at precisely the moment Sue opened the door. Her surprise as her small, pudgy hands left the keyboard in the position her "Manual for Beginners" decreed, can be imagined!

"Why, Mr. Lamont!" she exclaimed effusively, forgetting she had never met him, oblivious to her daughter's hasty introduction. "How good of you to come."

"We met at the Reservoir," declared Sue frankly, laying aside her hat and jacket, and patting her fair

hair neatly in place before the mirror over the mantel.

"By chance, I assure you, Mrs. Ford," explained Lamont, his Parisian code of delicacy in such matters tactfully coming to the rescue.

"Well, I'm glad you did," beamed the mother. "Don't you think she looks splendidly, Mr. Lamont?"

She slipped an arm lovingly about her daughter's neck.

"I've already complimented Miss Preston upon that," he returned graciously.

"Now, Mr. Lamont, you know how I hate compliments," protested Sue.

"But when they're true," he laughed, seating himself upon the new gilt chair Mrs. Ford had offered him.

"Mr. Lamont, I tell her she is much too modest, with all her talents," the mother declared, framing the rosy cheeks in her hands, much to Sue's embarrassment.

"After all, Mrs. Ford," returned Lamont, "is there anything more charming than modesty in a young girl? Isn't that a talent in itself? Most girls are so ridiculously conceited nowadays—often over nothing, I assure you." He sat gracefully at his ease, his ringed hands still gloved, still holding his stick and hat, much to the mother's surprise and anxiety—another Parisian method—a formality he carefully observed in calling upon young girls in the presence of their mothers. Had she been his fiancée he would have done the same in France. Had she been alone, married or widowed, with the door liable to open at any instant by husband

or friend, at least they would have found his presence correct and above suspicion, since it can be logically argued by the French that a gentleman whose hands are enslaved with his gloves, hat, and stick cannot possibly make love any more than the ostrich can pursue his mate with his head in the sand.

Mrs. Ford's anxiety was noticeable.

"Do let me take your stick and hat," she ventured, unable longer to repress her fears of his possible sudden departure. He seemed to give them to her almost unwillingly, peeling off his dogskin gloves and expressing himself as deeply touched by her welcome, and adding that he feared he was "very much *de trop*," as he noticed that she was about to go out.

"You must be frank with me, Mrs. Ford; I fear I am keeping you," he declared, rising briskly.

"You see, darling," she explained to Sue, "I was just going around to see the little Jones girl; she's been desperately ill, you know. You mustn't think of going, Mr. Lamont. You'll excuse me, won't you? —and you'll make yourself at home, won't you? You'll stay to tea, of course. Just one moment while I tell the maid."

"Won't you please go on telling me more of the wonderful things of your life, Mr. Lamont?" pleaded Sue, as her mother returned. "Oh, mother, I *have* had such a glorious walk. If you could only have heard all the interesting things Mr. Lamont has been telling me. Do tell me more about Planquette. Think of it, mother—Mr. Lamont actually knew him."

"Oh, do!" exclaimed Mrs. Ford. "How interesting —oh, dear! I wish I could stay, but I *must* see the Jones girl. They'll be hurt if I don't, you know, deary," she smiled, nodding to Sue. "But you're coming again, aren't you, Mr. Lamont?" she insisted, grasping his hand warmly.

"I should be charmed to," said he, and bowed over her hand; in fact, he lifted it to his lips, a gesture Mrs. Ford had read about in novels and seen on the stage, but had never experienced. Her startled, embarrassed delight did not escape him.

"Then you can tell me all about Planquette," said she, beaming over the honor he had bestowed upon her finger-tips. "Planquette! What a wonderful man he was, wasn't he? Of course, we've all read his books, his 'Miserables' was one of my father's favorites. Grand, isn't it, Mr. Lamont? So full of quaint pathos and humor. I've simply shrieked over it when I was a girl."

"But, mother dear," exclaimed Sue, "we were speaking of Planquette, the composer—not Victor Hugo!"

"Why, of course—how stupid of me."

"I was just telling your daughter," he explained, "that I happened to know Planquette, you see, because my mother and I used to rent a little villa in Cabourg for the summer, not far from his on the Normandy coast. We lived in France several years, Mrs. Ford, long after my schoolboy days there."

"Think of it! Well, I never; and you really lived in France. Of course you speak the French language

fluently. They say the French are so excitable. Cora Spink ought to know. She lived a whole month right in Paris, among the French. She said they pull and haul you about so."

The smile he had been able to repress for the last few minutes got the better of him. He grinned.

"I never found them so," he confessed quietly. "They're the kindest and calmest people in the world."

"S'pose you've seen everything," she affirmed, edging, to Lamont's intense relief, toward the door. "The guillotine, and the Opera House, and where Napoleon is buried."

Her small, pudgy hand hesitated on the big, white-china knob, while she added:

"How well I remember my father's engravings of these. They hung in the hall of our ancestral mansion in North Carolina. Mr. Snyder, an artist neighbor of ours, told my father—I remember so well—it was just after he became judge—that they were quite valuable. Father was a great admirer of the French. I recall him now going down into the cellar himself to decanter some old French brandy we had, the finest, they used to say, in the State of North Carolina, Mr. Lamont—as they always said," she declared proudly, "what the judge didn't have under his roof, no other North Carolinian did. Now I *must* be going. That little girl's ears are tingling, I know, to hear more about your wonderful discoveries. Good-by—or, rather, *au revoir* I should say, shouldn't I?"

She waved her hand lightly toward them both.

"*Au revoir,* madame," he returned, with a low bow.

The door with the china knob closed. She was gone, her step growing fainter down the stairs, and when at last she opened that half of the front door bearing Fortune hugging her sheaf of wheat, closed it with a click, and had stepped over the whirling dust and two circulars of a dentist celebrated for his cheap prices, and had made her way safely down the stoop, and Sue, with her back to her precious Chippendale table, started to break the awkward silence that had followed her mother's departure, Lamont stretched out both hands to her pleadingly.

"Come!" he exclaimed, softly. "Let us have a good talk. I have so much to say to you. Won't you sit there?" he entreated, nodding to the sofa.

He saw, with sudden delight, that her lips were quivering, and felt half the battle won.

"What's the matter?" he asked, tenderly, his hand hovering temptingly over her smooth shoulder, the pink flesh veiled by the thin, dark-blue sheen of her blouse.

"Nothing," she returned faintly, her voice trembling. "Oh! Mr. Lamont, please don't ask me."

"Are you lonely, too?" he asked. "Something *has* happened—something I've said, perhaps——"

He bent over her.

"Tell me. Have I hurt you? Tell me, dear—have I?"

She did not lift her eyes. Two big, hot tears blurred

them, and went their own way down her burning cheeks. His word, "dear," had had its effect.

"I can't tell you," she protested painfully.

"But you *must*," he insisted. "I've seen a lot, little girl. There's nothing that you could ever tell me that I wouldn't understand."

She made a brave effort to meet his eyes candidly.

"It wouldn't be right," she declared. "That is—it wouldn't be loyal of me. Oh! can't you understand? I should hate myself—afterward."

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Then it is more serious than I supposed."

"You couldn't help me, if I did tell you," she managed to say at length. "No one can help me. I've just got to go on and bear it, I suppose."

"But I wouldn't tell a soul," he insisted, his lips close to her cheek. "And perhaps I could help you. Little girl—whatever it is I'll never tell a soul. There—do you believe me? Ah! my poor little playmate—you were so happy this afternoon when we met."

"I'm never really happy," he heard her murmur. "I've never been really happy for a whole day in my life," she continued, twisting her handkerchief nervously into a hard moist knot. "Oh, can't you understand?"

"And who has?" he argued cheerily. "Happy for a whole day! Ah, no, my dear! One is never happy for a whole day. Happiness is never more than a question of seconds, and even they are rare. Happy

for a whole day! *Parbleu!* you do not ask much, do you, little *gourmande.*"

"So many people *are* happy," she faltered.

"You're not ill?" he ventured. "Bah! Not with that splendid health of yours. Then what? Tell me, are you in love?"

She started.

"If you *are,* you'd better get out of it—love's a terrible game. It doesn't pay. It's about as stupid a pastime as being jealous. Your eyes are too blue to be jealous. Come, be frank with me—am I right?"

"Your life's so different," she weakened to explain.

"My life? Ah! my poor little playmate, and so you consider *my* life's a happy one—married to a woman who never loved me from the first."

"Oh, please!" she protested.

"Whose indifference," he continued, "has taken the heart out of me at last, whose entire interest lies in her club and her women friends. I did love her; I loved her madly—madly, do you understand?—but, what's the use? Ah, *non, mon Dieu!*" he cried. "Real happiness in life lies in a good comrade," and would have gone on further to explain, but checked himself. "I see," he said after a moment. "It's *this,*" he ventured, sweeping his black eyes dramatically over the ugly little room.

She gave him a startled look in protest.

"I don't blame you, my dear."

She feared he would continue. He had guessed the truth, and to her relief ceased speaking, not daring

for the moment to touch even as skilfully as he could upon her impossible mother, or her stepfather, whom he could imagine by hearsay but had never seen. Nothing, in fact, escaped him; neither the sordid commonness of the apartment, with its hodgepodge of bad taste, its dingy semblance of comfort, or the mother's effusive ignorance. He had reached that period in his suit when he felt that he was wasting time, when he longed to take this little rose that had tumbled into all this common débris of the boresome and the ordinary into his arms.

She was again on the verge of confessing to him, innocently enough, at least how much pretty things appealed to her. Deep down in her young heart (though she was too loyal to confess it) she saw clearly her mother's ignorance and her failings; still deeper down she abhorred Ebner Ford. Even her respect for him had vanished shortly after her mother's marriage. He had even lied to her about the little money she had earned and had given him. And yet she ended by saying simply:

"Mother is so silly at times." Even this she softened by the fact that she loved her dearly.

"You seem so out of place in all this," he declared tensely, and so suddenly that before she knew it he had seized her swiftly in his arms. "Sue—listen to me!"

"Don't!" she gasped faintly, every nerve in her quivering in a helpless effort to free herself.

"Sue! Listen to me—you poor darling!" She

strained away from him, covering her lips with her clenched hands while he sought her fresh young mouth.

"Don't!" she pleaded. "Oh, please! Please! Plea——"

He stifled her words with his lips, in a kiss that left her trembling and dazed. Only when he saw the fear in her eyes, did he open his arms and release her. Well satisfied with his work, his black eyes gleaming, the memory of her lips aflame within him, and she standing there sobbing, her flushed face buried in her hands, did not lessen in the least for him the brief ecstasy of that moment.

She tried to cry out, to speak, but her voice failed her, despite the revulsion within her—all was so new, so terrible to her. Nothing was new to Pierre Lamont. It had been like a good draft of wine. He had drained his glass.

"I hate—you—" she stammered, but he expected that. Quick to hold that which he had won, he forced her burning hands into his own, pleading with her to forgive him, that he was only human, after all; that she had made him forget at least one moment of his own unhappiness; that if she had any pity in her heart, it was time to show it now; that she had haunted him ever since that afternoon he had played for her at Mrs. Van Cortlandts', though he was quick to pass over any further mention of her name (Rose, whom he met daily, the days he could not meet her being spent drinking morosely at his club). Again he begged

her to listen to him, to forgive him; he grew even humble in his promises, until she half believed him, and suffered herself to be led to a seat beside him on the sofa—still dazed and fearing his dominating insistence —poisoned with that subtle gentleness of his, and the low, earnest tone in his voice, a voice that promised her immunity from any further display of his emotions, while she sat there, twisting her moist little handkerchief into a harder knot and trying hard to keep back the tears.

That was exactly what happened, wasn't it, Lamont? But since you are no fool, you did not jeopardize her welfare. Life has made you what you are, and of course it is no fault of yours. Who gave you that power to hypnotize? Experience; long experience. With your good looks and your clever tenderness you have won a hundred victories over the defenseless and the weak that the world has never known, you handsome blackguard. Some day you will find your match, as you found her once in Paris—that little seamstress who never liked you—do you remember? The one who lived next to the creamery on the Rue Blanche and saved her sous and her sentiment, and who calmly dropped you a word one afternoon, and the next found you sailing from Havre. You even took a first-class ticket—as if the police are fastidious as to what class a man they're after travels in.

"What did he think of her? What *could* he think of her?" she thought—afraid to ask him.

"Please go," she murmured, at length, her breath

coming in short gasps. "Won't you go now?" she pleaded.

"And you'll forgive me?" he insisted. "We're going to be old friends, aren't we? Just as we were before—and forget all about it."

"I'll try," she breathed.

"You know I wouldn't hurt you for the world—you know that, don't you?"

She nodded, in silence.

"Tell me!"

"Yes," she said, half audibly, meeting his eyes bravely.

"When may I see you again?" he ventured easily, rising to his feet.

"I—I don't know—perhaps never. It depends so much on you."

"There! That's better—of course, it depends on me. We'll be good friends—you shall see. I keep my promises, you know. *There*—are you happier?"

She did not answer. Before he could speak, his quick ear and hers caught the sound of the front door opening, and her mother's step on the stairs. Instinctively she flew to her room to freshen her tear-stained face and rearrange her hair. In less time than it took Mrs. Ford to reach her door Sue was beside him, looking remarkably calm and neat under the circumstances, he thought, for her age. The next moment he bent ceremoniously over her hand as Mrs. Ford rushed into the room, bursting with good news over the little Jones girl, and overjoyed to find him still there. Her delight being of short duration, since be-

fore she was fully aware of it, he had graciously taken his leave, allaying her fears with so sincere a promise to call soon again, that she followed him out into the hall, and sent him three *au revoirs* down the stairs, as the last vestige of him passed Fortune and her dusty harvest. Even then she flew to the window, her mouth as small as a button, pursed in expectation, but he did not look up. He was thirsty and wanted a drink, and with that foremost in his mind, set out briskly for the Hotel Brunswick, where he met Dicky Riggles, who was drunk, and his bulldog, who was sober—and so on down to Rose Van Cortlandt, who had been waiting for him in the café of the old Martin, where she half forgot her bad temper in conversing in her worst French to a patient waiter, who spoke it fluently.

And where do you suppose they dined? Close by, on the corner, at Solari's, that fine old house with its blinds always closed and its door always open, and where Rose became even cheerful over the best green-turtle soup in the whole world and as mellow and convincing a bottle of Moulin à Vent as was ever born on the sunny flanks of Burgundy—a pure and noble wine, discreetly served by an aged waiter. They were the only persons in the spotlessly clean old dining-room, as old-fashioned as the bar down-stairs, whose marble statues of "The Three Graces" always seemed to be thinking of the past.

"Well, darling, you *have* had a gala-day, haven't you?" exclaimed Mrs. Ford, bustling excitedly back from her disappointed vigil at the window. "Why,

my dear, he's simply charming. Such manners! Did you notice his rings? Superb, weren't they? Tell me, honey, was the tea nicely served?"

"Mr. Lamont said he never touches it—so—so we didn't have any," explained Sue, wearily enough for her mother to notice it.

"Headache, honey?" she asked tenderly. "I'm so distressed about the tea, deary. I did want him to see my new embroidery."

"It's nothing, mother—only one of my old headaches. I'll be all right after a little nap."

"I hope he didn't notice it, darling. Tell me—did I look nicely?"

"Why, of course, mother——"

"Didn't he think my new hat becoming? Don't tell me he didn't, for I know he did. He could hardly take his eyes off it—such a sweet surprise from father, wasn't it?"

"Mr. Lamont didn't mention it, mother."

"Well," she sighed, laying the new jet bonnet over the two-handed copy of "The Storming of Sebastopol" on top of the piano, "I suppose he sees so many, doesn't he?"

"I'm sure he does, mother," Sue returned quietly, moving wearily to the new gilt chair he had occupied —another one of Ebner Ford's recent munificent surprises, which she put back in its place next to the piano, a formidable-looking black upright with a weak tone, its fret-sawed front backed with magenta satin. Then she entered her bedroom and closed her door.

CHAPTER XII

Ever since that memorable tea at Enoch's, when he had covered Sue's hand with his own in the twilight, and sat there under the spell of her voice, Joe had been working like a beaver. A whole week had passed, and though they lived under the same roof, he had only seen Sue twice. Once in the presence of her mother, and two days after Lamont's visit, which she did not mention, when he had taken her to see the menagerie in Central Park. Those few moments in the twilight at Enoch's had made them friends—good friends—a brotherly sort of friendship, which Joe was too frank and honest, and too timid to develop into anything like Mr. Lamont's European love-making, and which Sue was the happier for, since she had not yet quite recovered from that tragic afternoon that had left her dazed, and in a state of remorse that took all her courage to conceal from her mother. There is nothing that wins the heart of a pure young girl more than implicit confidence. Yet no one was more in ignorance of this than Joe. In the Park they talked on before the eagle and the bear, the sleepy lioness, and the alert pacing wolves, of a lot of happy, wholesome things, and when he finally brought her home she left him with her promise to walk with him again "whenever

he pleased," and with that he left her, elated, remembering he had also promised her a variety of things, one being that he was going to do his best to make a success in his profession.

To Atwater's slow amazement, a change had come over his partner—this time for the better. Joe got down to the office on time, and left it late. Atwater had a punctilious idea about time that disgusted Joe. He even went so far as to place a neatly ruled pad in the entrance of their modest office, with a pencil tethered by a string attached, so that their two aids, the conscientious Swiss draftsman and the silent Swede, whose methodical calculations on building strains guaranteed that Joe's artistic architectural dreams would not fall down and kill people, might truthfully record the hour of the Swiss and the Swede's coming and their going. Joe considered it an insult. He appealed to the dignity of his partner about it, as suggesting the rigorous discipline of a sweat-shop or a penitentiary. He argued that both the Swiss and the Swede were honorable fellows, whose heart and soul were in their work, and that it was no way to get the best work out of a man by treating him every morning and evening with humiliating distrust and forcing him to swear to his presence to the minute over his signature. Atwater was adamant, however. He could not see the idyllic loyalty which Joe imagined. He explained to Joe that the Swiss was a high-priced man; that time was money, and that they were paying him fifty dollars a week; as for the Swede, he got thirty. Then there

was that baseball maniac of a red-headed office boy, who got five, and who hoped some day to escape from slavery and pitch ball for a salary. Atwater proved he was right. The Swede got to be popular in a near-by café, and the conscientious Swiss fell in love with a girl who lived on the horizon of Brooklyn; whereas the office boy forged the lack of promptitude of both for remuneration enough to provide himself liberally with pink ice-cream and cigarettes. And when finally Atwater fired all three and replaced them by three seemingly worthy successors, Joe began to see the wisdom of the time system, and even signed it himself.

There were late afternoons now when Joe lighted the whistling gas-jet over his drawing-board and kept on working after the closing hour—Atwater often leaving word with the janitor that "Mr. Grimsby was still up-stairs." More than this, Joe had been pegging away over his new idea in gauche and gray paper, and had already made a stunning big drawing in color for the Lawyers Consolidated Trust Company Building, a job he and Atwater had recently tackled in competition, with the result that it was hung in the crypt of the Academy, away down underneath the stairs in a corner, where a prowling critic with a lighted match discovered it and gave it an honorable mention in an evening paper.

"A clever and original rendering," said he, "is shown by Mr. Joseph Grimsby in his competition drawing for the Lawyers Consolidated Trust Com-

pany. We predict for this young architect a brilliant future." It was on the tip of his pen, no doubt, to add: "Call again, Joe," since the beginning of his career as an art critic dated scarcely two weeks previous, when he had been a reporter on the weekly news of his home town on the Hudson, a journal devoted to live stock and visiting.

What the painters said was different. These strongly opinionated personages spoke a different language. They considered Joe's basement effort "clever," but were frank in saying that his somewhat amusing trick in gauche and gray paper had no artistic value whatsoever. Certain important members of the hanging committee poohpoohed it, hesitated—and condescended finally to send it to the basement. Certainly it was not allowed to mar the ensemble of the galleries up-stairs, hung with the product of good, bad, and indifferent painters, many of whom had a highly estimated opinion of their own work, and deplored the lack of artistic sense in the general public to appreciate it. Narrow minds and narrow lives make few friends. For several years Enoch had seen the exhibition open. It always seemed to him to be the same exhibition—revarnished and rehung. The same cows came down to drink, the same fishing-smacks put out to sea in melodramatic weather, and the same sweet and unapproachable girl in the colonial doorway smiled on with her constant companion, a red, red rose. There were soggy wood interiors with rippling turpentined brooks; slick sunsets and sunrises, stippled beyond a

finish; but what were lacking, Enoch declared, "were men who saw nature freshly and vigorously, with open eyes, and the clear courage of their convictions to smash pat upon a canvas something that was really real."

Enoch had again made his annual tour of the galleries and came down-stairs in so savage a humor, grumbling to himself over the "rot," he called it, he had seen, that more than once he stopped on the broad flight to express his views to a painter of his acquaintance, finally opening up on Mr. Combes, the famous collector, with so much vibrancy, that it took the old connoisseur's breath away.

"Rot, Combes," he repeated; "scarcely a canvas in the lot that has a vigorous note in it. A lot of tomfoolery in paint. That's what our modern art is coming to—and what's more, Combes," he exclaimed out loud (unheeding that he was in ear-shot of others, and not caring if he was), "it gets worse yearly," and with this he started to go out, chucking the catalogue he had purchased away in the vestibule, when he caught sight of the small exhibit beneath the stairs, turned back and glanced hurriedly over it, and to his surprise and delight found Joe's competition drawing.

"By the gods!" he exclaimed, rewiping his spectacles and searching out every inch of the big drawing in gauche. "And so that good fellow did that, did he? No wonder they stuck it out of sight—too good for 'em."

He sprang back up the stairs after Combes, found

him after a search through the galleries, and insisted on his coming down with him.

"Look at it, man!" he cried with enthusiasm. "See how he's handled that sky. Look at the truth and clearness of his shadows. Knew where to stop, too, didn't he——"

"Very original, Crane," confessed the connoisseur. "Um! Very original, indeed. A new method, as you say—but not a very interesting subject——"

"What's the subject got to do with it?" retorted Enoch testily. "I tell you a fellow who can do that can do anything. It opens a brand-new field in water-color. It's his vigorous handling, never mind the subject. How many architectural drawings have you seen that come within a mile of it? Why, the boy's a genius."

"Know him?" ventured the connoisseur, fearing a fresh outburst.

"Know him! I should think I did know him. One of the cheeriest and best fellows in the world. Lives in my house. Simple as they make them. You'll hear more of him some day, my friend, mark my word."

Then the two strolled out together, Enoch's exit being noticed by more than one painter with relief. He had expressed his opinions openly before in the galleries, and was not popular. He had also made several speeches relative to his views on modern art at several public dinners, which did not increase his popularity, either. Furthermore, he had taken the pains to write a series of articles—one upon the lack

of good taste in both modern painting and architecture, which made him enemies—strongly accenting, as he did, the timely necessity of giving architecture a far more distinguished place in art than it was given. "A place," he would thunder away, "which Greece gave it, and which the world has recognized for centuries." He used to expound upon the beauty and plain common sense in the classic compared with the hodgepodge of new styles—or, rather, the attempt to create a new style, which always amounted to the usual jumble and stupid elaboration. "There's no jumble in the classic," he'd declare hotly, with all the vehemence of his conviction. "Start from the very ground —the foundations of their buildings, and you can trace a logical growth of base, column, capital, and architrave, to the apex of roof, not an unnecessary detail —more than that, the Greeks knew the value of a plain surface as a rest for the eye." At which there was always sound applause from the architects, and a doubtful grumbling among the painters, whose failing it was, declared Enoch, "always to overelaborate."

"Some of you fellows," he'd cry out, "never seem to know when to stop." It was a favorite expression with him to say the next day:

"I got on my hind legs, and gave it to them straight from the shoulder."

If he was often a convincing orator, despite his almost savage brusqueness at times, it was because he was (and few people knew it) a most able lawyer, though his business life was always more or less of a

mystery. That he actually had an office was known only to a few friends. It was many years since he had practised law. Somehow that modest office of Enoch's in South Street contained memories that were dear to him. He was loyal to it. Did he not pay its rent in its old age? And now and then came to see it, to spend an hour there in the company of his old desk —a solid, friendly old piece of oak, with eighteen deep and comfortable drawers and plenty of room for his legs beneath. Here he would sit thinking of many things of the past, of hard fights that had won legal victories, under the spell of that pleasing sensation that no human being could disturb him. Old McCarthy, the janitor, attended to that, and kept his snug library of law-books very decently dusted, and I verily believe that faithful Irishman would have gone as far as to tell an inquisitive visitor that "Mr. Crane was long since dead and buried, and his office sealed up by the estate"—if such a thing were possible.

It was a cheerful, quiet little box of a place, after all, and the sun when it shone never forgot to send its warm rays across its worn and faded carpet. The whole place seemed to have been asleep for years, and only awakened now and then to receive its owner. Very few were aware that Enoch owned the building, but he did, the question of lease and rent and payment passing through other hands, according to his orders. How many of its occupants in years gone by had been in arrears and were astonished to find that no one insisted on their departure! Somehow

they always paid in the end, yet they never knew that the testy and crabbed old lawyer, whose tirades against certain shrewd visitors could be plainly heard as far as the shaky, greasy elevator, was responsible for the kindly delay. He was kind, too, to the book-agent, especially the tired woman in the direst misery, bravely trying to sell one of those thick and superb volumes that are so often utterly useless to humanity. How many he talked to and sent away encouraged—often with new and practical ideas to better their condition.

He reached home this afternoon, still grumbling over the exhibition, and full of enthusiasm over Joe's drawing.

"So Combes didn't like the subject, did he? Combes is an ass," he muttered, and arriving at Joe's door, knocked thrice, found him out, hastily scribbled the following on his visiting card, and slipped it beneath his door:

Hearty Congratulations to you, my boy. I've seen it. Splendid. Don't worry if it wasn't hung on the line. It deserved it.

E. C.

Then he went on up to his room, where he made up his mind to pay his respects to Joe at his office the next morning. He paced around his centre-table, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"I'll give him a surprise," he smiled. "I'll take that dear child with me; he deserves it."

By some miracle, not a word had yet reached his

ears of Lamont's call, though Mrs. Ford had lost no time in telling the Misses Moulton the very first time she found their door ajar, prattling on effusively to Miss Ann about Lamont's charm, his knowledge, and his princely manners.

As for Ebner Ford, he considered Lamont's visit and his attentions to his stepdaughter purely in the light of business prosperity, and already foresaw, owing to Lamont's social position, the patronage of a vast horde of fashionable people for his laundry company. More than once he was on the point of hunting up Lamont, and having a plain talk with him, of explaining to him clearly, man to man, a proposition which would mean dollars to them both. He decided to offer him something really worth while—a five per cent commission on the net profits of every client sent by him. He already saw Lamont persuading dozens of housekeepers, whose wealth and social position were renowned, to part with their laundresses and confide their delicate fineries to The United Family Laundry Association—and had blocked out a circular to the effect that the most expensive lingerie in the company's care would come out unscathed from the wash. If business warranted it they would put in a separate plant of machines, exclusively devoted to the fashionable set, replacing any garment damaged, for a price estimated by an expert, and running ribbons for every lady client free of charge. And all this he explained to his wife, whom he had been parsimoniously spoiling of late with poor little Miss Ann's money.

"Well, Em," he concluded, "what do you think of it? Pretty encouraging, ain't it?" Possibly for the first time in her married life with him she put down her plump foot firmly in opposition. She grew red and white by turns, and felt like weeping.

"What do I think of it, Ebner?" she replied nervously. "Why, I never heard of such a thing. Why, why, Mr. Lamont would be insulted. Why, he'd never call on girlie again." She looked at him with the set expression of a small owl defying a hawk.

"Insulted, would he!" he broke out. "What's he got to be insulted about? Ain't I offerin' him a fair price? Ain't I? You can bet your life I am. There ain't no man yet that ever got insulted over five per cent. Know what it means? Course you don't, or you wouldn't talk like you're doin'. Figger it out for yourself. Them fashionable women send more clothes to the wash in a week than some women do in a month. Think they're going to stop at an extry handkerchief? Not much. Reg'lar extravagance with 'em. They got tasty, dainty things by the dozens. Take the shirt-waists and the summer dresses alone. You've seen yourself how business has improved lately, ain't you?" He nodded significantly to the new clock on the mantel, and glanced likewise at the new gilt chair with a hurt expression, as if neither had been really appreciated. "There's your new bonnet, and your new dress, too, and there's plenty more comin' where they came from, little woman."

She walked over to him and put her short, fat arms

about his gaunt, red neck, begging him tearfully to forgive her.

"There! I shouldn't have said a word," she declared, wiping her eyes. "Only I've got daughter's welfare to think of. And, oh, Ebner, you can't understand, but think of what Mr. Lamont's friendship may mean to her. Think of the entrée into society he can and will give her. I'm just as sure of it as my name's Emma Ford. He'd never in the world agree to such a thing. He's too much of a swell—holds his head too high, dear."

"There you go again," he blurted out, pacing around her, his thumbs in the armholes of his fancy waistcoat. "I've a good mind to see him now and have a plain talk with him. He won't refuse it, don't you worry. He'd be a fool if he did."

"Oh, please, Ebner, don't," she begged. "I'd—I'd be mortified to death."

"Won't cost him a cent, will it, to decide? Anyway," he returned, softening a trifle, "he can think the thing over, can't he?"

She did not reply.

"Can't he?" he insisted.

She subsided meekly on the sofa.

"I don't ask you to promise me anything, dear," she continued feebly. "I'm not asking anything—am I?—only—" again her voice faltered—"only I'm thinking of girlie. Have you spoken to her about it?"

He wheeled around sharply and faced her.

"Spoken to her! No, I ain't spoken to her, and I

ain't a goin' to. She's got idees about things that ain't mine. She's all dreams and music and singin'. She's got her own line of business and I got mine."

"Ebner!"

"Well, what—ain't I right? If I had to confine myself to song for a livin' I'd go and hang myself. Ever see anybody get rich on art?" he sneered. "I ain't. It's noble, but there ain't nothin' in it. Never will be, an' never was."

She sat listening to him—the fresh tears starting to her eyes, but she had ceased to protest. What was the use? He was like that at times, and she had learned to let him have his say, to the end, like a barking dog. But in the end she felt convinced that for her sake he would spare her feelings in regard to Lamont. She even ventured that it would be better in any event to wait until he became an older friend, and that he finally agreed to, adding:

"Well, Em, you'll have your way, I suppose, as usual; you generally do."

He had been more right than wrong. Lamont would have accepted the five per cent gladly, providing the little transaction was kept in secret, like that amiable agreement which existed between himself and his tailor in appreciation of the clients he sent him. Practically half his clothes were given him free of charge, and the other half for the wholesale price of the cloth alone. The customers he sent paid the difference. If it was a question of wines, he always recommended a certain brut champagne from Rheims. In the matter of cotil-

lons and caterers, he also had a marked preference. Indeed, very few among those of his women friends who entertained lavishly would think of deciding the details of a cotillon or a large dinner without coming to "Pierre" for advice. There was nothing he would not do for a woman. He was kindness itself, organizing, arranging, and all with so much good taste in everything, so much originality, too, that the affair was bound to be a success. Was it not he who thought of the live little rabbits for favors at the Jimmy Joneses' —a huge success. Some even took them home, where they died from fright and rich food, or were given to the grocer to be cared for and forgotten. Delicious idea!

That which had not yet reached Enoch's ears was imparted to him the next morning by Mrs. Ford when he called for Sue, with all the effusiveness that her mother was capable of. Save for a sudden hard expression that crossed his face for an instant, and which Sue noticed, he received the news without a word of protest or remark. At the mention of Lamont's name and the fact that he had called, his square jaw stiffened. He had set his heart on taking Sue to Joe. He did not wish to spoil her morning's pleasure, but in that brief moment his disgust and bitterness toward Lamont reached a point which it took all his self-possession to control, but control it he did. Mrs. Ford had never seen him more gracious or more genial, and so they started off together, Sue insisting on walking.

"But it's a long way," explained Enoch; "several miles, my dear." She shook her pretty head.

"I don't care," she laughed. "Oh, do let's walk, Mr. Crane," she pleaded, "unless it's—that is—unless it's too far for you." And that, of course, settled the matter. They set out at a good pace together, Enoch stubbornly holding it, and was amazed to find when they got as far as the post-office, that Sue confessed she was "not in the least tired." He strode along by her side, feeling younger, she keeping pace with him with the stride of a slim young girl to whom walking was as easy as laughing or breathing. Now and then they stopped at the big store windows, Enoch explaining to her a host of interesting things about the methods in manufacture of the articles displayed. Indeed, he was as well informed as an encyclopedia, and where most young girls would have been bored, Sue took a lively interest in everything, and kept asking him more and more questions. He explained to her about guns and fishing-tackle—the skill required in making a perfect hexagonal trout-rod by hand, and how trout and salmon-flies were tied, mostly by young girls and women, whose deft fingers were far quicker and more skilful than a man's. He described to her in the matter of gun-barrels the difference between "twist" and "Damascus," pointing out the beauty of the old hammer-gun, in comparison with the new-fashioned hammerless, which he considered ugly and dangerous, and which, having no hammers, lacked the beauty of line and the true personality of a fowling-piece. Be-

fore the windows of the furriers, she listened to him while he told her of the habits of fur-bearing animals, and so they kept on, past the jeweller, the wholesale cobbler, and the fireproof safer—past cotton goods and babies' caps—buttons by the million, and hardware by the gross. It was a far different conversational stroll from Lamont's. It was so entertaining, clean, and practical. There was no subtle passion of Chopin in it, and she was rather glad there was not. When at last they reached State Street and entered the slippery entrance of the banana and the lemon merchants' building, and had ascended the dingy stairs—dimly illumined by a single gas-jet flaring under a piece of smoked tin, and at the end of a lemon-scented corridor had opened the door of "Atwater & Grimsby, Architects," and been sleepily greeted by the new office boy, who yawned over Enoch's card and carried it languidly into the drafting-room beyond—Sue waited by Enoch's side with very much the same feeling that a young girl would who had been persuaded into surprising a young man who had not the remotest idea in the world she was there, and who, finding that she was, rushed out, absolutely flabbergasted with delight. In his enthusiasm the young man first gripped Enoch by both shoulders heartily, and then stretched forth both hands in greeting to a young girl whom he considered far above all other young girls. Then he dragged them both into the drafting-room, where the two new draftsmen at work bowed to them solemnly as they passed, and where Joe hurried into Atwater's

private office to break the news to his partner, back of its board partition. Atwater heaved a sigh, calmly rolled down his sleeves, washed his hands, disconsolately combed his hair, put on his coat, and came forth, but by this time the loveliest girl in the whole world was perched contentedly on Joe's high drafting-stool, and eagerly poring over a mass of his sketches, Enoch bending over one pretty shoulder and Joe over the other, while he explained how bad they were, and received in return more than one sincere little compliment, and a look in her dear eyes that thrilled him.

After a few brief moments of awkward welcome, Atwater excused himself and retired to his den, where he took off his coat, hung it back on its peg, rolled up his sleeves again, ran his fingers through his hair, and was about to say "Hell" very plainly, but checked himself and contented himself with "Gee whiz!" instead. They were more Joe's friends than his, he argued to himself, as he rebent himself over a new lot of plumbers' specifications. He knew there was no more serious work for Joe that day. He had seen it in his eyes. He heard it now in his frank, cheery laugh, that rang out and reached him over the board partition of his sanctum. He knew, too, that Joe would be capable of anything to make them feel at home, even to sending out for a little luncheon and serving it himself on his drawing-board. But it was not Paris. It was plain, hard, businesslike New York, where the conservative customs of the Puritan still prevailed. There were no tender chickens, fresh

roasted—a half, a quarter, or even a wing—to be had within a stone's throw; no good-natured *marchand de vin* to send up an excellent bottle of Burgundy for twenty-three sous, and his wishes for the best of appetites for nothing. Here it was all cold pie and business—a place where even millionaires gobbled their sandwich luncheons standing, a thing which even the poorest workman in Paris would not think of doing—since to eat one must have not only plenty of time, but a table, a chair, a knife and fork, clean plates and clean napkins, *hors-d'œuvres*, a filled glass, salad and cheese and coffee and a liqueur—all in a snug corner to his liking, where he can talk to the proprietor and pay compliments to his wife, and discuss at his leisure anything that enters his head to the strong, bare-armed girl who serves him.

"And what is this?" Sue asked with eager interest.

"Oh, that's a little house we're doing on Long Island for a bride-to-be," Joe explained, pushing aside the pile of sketches Sue had been looking over, and revealing the pinned-down tissue-paper tracing beneath he had been at work on when they arrived.

"How fascinating!" exclaimed Sue. "Do tell me all about it."

"Well, you see, it's one of those modest matrimonial jobs," laughed Joe, "where the fiance and the bride-to-be want luxury and comfort, and a stunning design, and plenty of closet room, and sea view, and sun in every room, and——"

"For next to nothing," remarked Enoch.

"That's it, Mr. Crane. For so little that it isn't easy. Every foot counts—every inch sometimes." And he began to explain the planning of the three floors—placing one over the other, that Sue might better understand their respective relations.

"I've given them a corking big dining-room, anyway," Joe declared. "And here's the guest-room over it, with two dandy bay windows looking out to sea."

"And this room to the left?" ventured Sue.

"Oh! That'll do for a billiard-room—or—or a nursery. It would make a rattling good studio, too—you see, I thought it would be a good thing to leave them one room they could do what they liked with."

"But where's the kitchen?" Sue asked seriously.

"Well, you see—that's just it. I'm hanged if I know where to put the kitchen. They'll have to have one, I suppose. I've been worrying over that kitchen."

"Why don't you put the kitchen up-stairs?" suggested Sue sweetly.

Joe started.

"But they never put kitchens up-stairs," he exclaimed.

"I don't see why they shouldn't," she declared. "I can see a nice, big, airy kitchen under the roof—and then, of course, you'd get rid of the smell."

"By Jove! that's an idea," he cried. "A bully idea! Why, you're wonderful! How did you ever happen to think of that?"

"Oh! I don't know," she laughed, a little embar-

rassed. "It just seemed to me practical, I suppose. I don't see why people should always live over their kitchens. Then you can have the kitchen and the servants all on one floor, out of the way."

"Corking!" cried Joe. "By Jove, I'll do it."

"May I make a mark?" she ventured, picking up his pencil.

"Anywhere you like—all over it, if you wish," he declared eagerly.

They watched her—Enoch with grim delight, Joe in silent ecstasy, every mark of his pencil that her little hand made dear to him—while she crossed out the top floor partitions, indicating the new roof kitchen and the arrangement for the servants' rooms, with so much clever ingenuity and womanly common sense that Enoch regarded her with pride and amazement.

"There! Will that do?" she laughed, as she laid aside his pencil—warm from the pressure of her fingers —a pencil which Joe seized the moment they had gone, and kept in hiding in his top bureau drawer.

"Do? I should think it *would* do. It's glorious," cried Joe. The marks her pencil had made were precious to him now.

"What a wonderful housekeeper you would make, my dear," declared Enoch.

But she only flushed a little in reply and slipped deftly from the high stool before either Joe or Enoch could assist her.

A few moments later they were gone, and Joe returned to the throne her trim little figure had aban-

doned and "got to work." That is, he sat on his high stool and, with his chin in his hands, dreamed over every tender line she had drawn, but it was not architecture that absorbed his thoughts.

To Enoch's surprise, Sue insisted on returning home alone in a car.

"Please don't bother about me," she told him as he saw her aboard. It is quite possible that she divined from his quickened step as they left Joe Grimsby that Enoch had a pressing engagement, and that it was already nearly noon. Enoch did not insist—the fact was he had made up his mind to reach his club as soon as possible, waiting only for her to wave him a cheery good-by from the car platform, and then turning at a rapid pace set out for the up-town Elevated.

En route he told himself that Joe was in love with her, but that Sue did not care for him. He felt this strongly. She had been too cheery in his presence, more interested in Joe's work than himself, and had lacked that telltale silent manner, which is an unfailing sign—the forerunner of melancholy, which is the sign of true love, indeed. Lamont was paramount in his mind. He wondered what influence he had had over Sue by his visit. Again he had determined to find him. When he reached his club he shut his jaw hard as he ascended the steps—muttering to himself, unconscious even that the doorman had welcomed him with a respectful "Good morning, sir."

CHAPTER XIII

A roar of laughter broke from the big front room as Enoch crossed the club's hall. The volley of hilarity came from a group of men seated around a small table littered with eight freshly drained cocktail-glasses, a silver-plated bell with a hair-trigger, and three brazen ash-trays heaped with cigarette butts. It was one of those high-keyed, cackling outbursts that perorated the point of a new story and left no possible doubt to the passer-by as to what kind of a story it was. Some stories, like some poisonous weeds, are born and thrive in the shade.

As Enoch entered the room, he saw, to his satisfaction, that Lamont was among the group. It was evident, too, from his manner and his quiet smile, that the tale had been of his telling. The merriment subsided in chuckles; the group, still red to the gills from laughter, suddenly caught sight of Enoch, and one of those abrupt silences ensued, that told plainly he was not welcome. He came forward, however, receiving a sullen glance of recognition from Lamont, a half-hearted "Hello, Crane!" from another, and a hesitating "Er—won't you join us?" from a third, and the third was Teddy Dryer.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Enoch, and drew up a chair, which they grimly made room for.

"Take the orders, please," he said, turning to the waiter hovering back of him.

"They're taken, Mr. Crane."

"Take them again," said Enoch sharply, and sat down.

"You missed it," wheezed little Teddy Dryer at his elbow, wiping his small, bleary eyes. "Lamont's latest from Paris—a screamer—go on, Pierre, let's have another—hot off the stove this time, old top."

"Go on," shouted the rest (new stories were rare). "Encore! Encore!"

"All right," acquiesced Lamont, leaning forward. "Here's another," and the group bent close in greedy expectation, eager to catch every syllable, pricking up their cocktail-ruddied ears, for it was not the sort of a tale that could be shouted to the housetops.

Another roar broke forth as he finished—a tale that would have made a scullery-maid blush to her knees.

"Oh, Lord!" they wheezed when they could get their breath. "That's the limit."

"Where the devil did you get that, Pierre?" choked Teddy Dryer.

"From a girl in Paris," smiled Lamont; "a big brunette who lived back of the Moulin de la Galette. Best-hearted girl you ever met. She said it was a fact; that it happened to *her*."

Enoch's jaw stiffened, but he did not open his lips.

A clean tray with nine half-frozen Martinis arrived. The table, relieved of its stale litter of drained glasses,

became again the centre of thirsty interest, and the talk drifted on into past and present scandal, in which the varied vicissitudes of those who had been unfortunate enough to marry were freely discussed; at length a circle of old friends were touched upon with a certain loyal camaraderie, and their womanly virtues extolled. Enoch was enlightened to the fact that they were all "thoroughbreds" and the "salt of the earth." Some of them were exceedingly handsome, others still pretty —nearly all of them, he learned, had cleverly managed to be freed from the bond of matrimony, looking none the worse for the experience, with a snug fortune as a comforting recompense. There were incidentally a few children among them as an annoying hinderance to the freedom their mammas had paid so dearly for, but as long as there were governesses in the world and fashionable boarding-schools with short vacations, things were not as bad as they might be.

The talk grew deeper, more confidential, and so low in tone that the listening waiter caught next to nothing. He had, however, two new stories for the barman, and should have been content.

There were widows whose hearts and whose bank-accounts were large, and whose afternoon teas were popular; the seasoned group about Enoch knew them all. Indeed, their daily lives would have been dull existences without them. At their homes they met other charming women—and so it went. New York was not such a bad place after all. Some of these faithful pals of theirs were getting older, but that was

to be expected; besides, they were getting older themselves, and the woman of thirty—let us say thirty-six, to be truthful—was beginning to seem young to them. As for "the old guard," their good hearts and presence of mind had been tried and proven scores of times, never a reproach, God bless them, *never*—even when a fellow called after a heavy day at the club, the good old welcome was there, the same genial gleam of womanly affection and understanding. Then those formal occasions—a bevy of people to tea when a chap least expected it, and had to hang on like grim death to his best manners, and the soberest corner of his brain to pass the trembling sandwiches, and keep a cup of tea on its saucer with the skill of a juggler. Then on with a fresh whiskey and soda, served far more daintily than at the club—the heavy, generous decanter, the tall, frail glass, the Irish-lace doilies. Laughter, the fragrance of violets, those serious little tête-à-têtes which generally amount to nothing. The warm pressure of a hand in a formal good-by—bah! it is a dull game to be always drinking with men. Those interminable rounds at the club; the same dull men and the same dull stories. Men bored Lamont. The horizon of his playground lay far beyond that of most of his friends. His knowledge of life, too. When there were a woman's eyes to drink to he lost no time—to him the subtle spell of her whole being slipped, as it were, into his glass, quickening his pulse like a magic draft. What did it matter if he was now and then dragged to the opera, that she might see and be

seen? There were moments which amply repaid the sacrifice.

Throughout it all Enoch had not opened his lips. He had absorbed their blasé twaddle about marriage, the hinderance of children, and had drunk in with increasing disgust their eulogy over their various women friends. They had to a man at that table laid bare to him the worthlessness of their lives, their contemptible egoism, the hollow mockery in which they held love. Even at the Rabelaisian tale of Lamont's he had held his tongue, but now the slow gathering pent-up rage within him exploded, as sudden as a pistol-shot.

"It's a cheap game some of you fellows are playing," he cried hotly, wrenching forward in his chair and riveting his gaze on Lamont.

The rest stared at him in amazement.

"I mean exactly what I say—a cheap game—do you understand me?"

The muscles of his jaw quivered. A murmur of grumbling protest circled the table.

"I'm talking to *you*, Lamont," he half shouted. "You seem to forget, sir, that there are some things sacred in life." He brought up his closed fist sharply. "That there are some good women in this world, whom marriage has made happy, whom children have made happy, to whom the love of an honest man has been a comfort and a blessing."

"Oh! cut it out, Crane," groaned fat Billy Adams. "We're not here to listen to a sermon."

"To whom," continued Enoch vibrantly, bringing down his closed fist on the table's edge, "men with your blasé worldly ideas, your sapped and satiated senses, your ridicule of everything that stands for honesty and common decency, your mockery of that which life holds dear, are loathsome. That's exactly the word for it—loathsome."

Lamont shifted back in his seat, flicking the ashes from his cigarette irritably—a sullen gleam in his black eyes.

"I don't see where my private affairs concern you," he said evenly, while the rest watched him with bated breath, wondering with lively interest if the next word from Enoch would start a worse quarrel.

"Your private affairs concern me," ripped out Enoch, "when they concern those who are dear to me. I need not make it clearer—you understand perfectly whom I refer to."

There was a louder murmur and a raising of eyebrows in quick surprise.

"I warned you, Lamont, you remember—some time ago—I thought that would be sufficient. I have learned since that it was not."

"See here," cried Lamont, "you leave my affairs alone. My affairs are *my* affairs—not yours."

"You're right," put in fat Billy Adams, and was seconded by a chorus of approval.

"They're mine, I tell you," snapped Enoch, "as long as they concern those who are dear to me; those whom I have every right to protect."

"Protect!" sneered Lamont. "Ah, *mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, lapsing into French with a low, easy laugh, "the one you refer to does not need your protection. I assure you she is quite capable of taking care of herself. Don't worry; she's no fool; let me tell you that Miss——"

Enoch's eyes blazed.

"I forbid you," he cried, facing him savagely, "to drag that child's name before this company."

"You seem to be extraordinarily interested in young girls for a man of your age," sneered Lamont. "Your attitude in this trifling matter, barring its insolence, is amusing."

"Trifling matter!" retorted Enoch, half springing out of his chair. "Yes, you're right—it *is* a trifling matter. You are trifling, sir, with the affections of a child. Your attentions to this child are damnable, sir! You seem to be determined to continue them; very well, let me tell you once for all, that it will be my business to put a stop to them, and I intend to do it."

"A child," chuckled Lamont. "At about what age may I ask do you consider childhood ceases? I'm not interested in children, though I know a good many old gentlemen who are, who become doddering idiots over a girl of sixteen, until they find she is twenty. I know that fatherly sentimentality of yours. Paris is full of it."

"Stop, sir!" cried Enoch.

"The Bois de Boulogne is full of them any after-

noon," continued Lamont. "Old beaux who go tottering up and down the Avenue des Acacias—*tous ces vieux gagas—ces vieux marcheurs,*" he laughed, lapsing again into French. "There's the Compte de Valmontier—he's one of them; he's eighty if he's a day. You can see him any afternoon with his valet back of him to keep him from falling, and his victoria and pair followed him in waiting." Lamont turned slowly, and for the space of a few seconds gazed at Enoch, with his black eyes half closed and his mouth half open.

There are some expressions far more insolent than words.

"But the Compte de Valmontier is a gentleman," he added coldly. "He does not choose his club to denounce a fellow member in, over an affair which does not concern him—among a circle of friends where he is not welcome."

"S-sir!" stammered Enoch, white and quivering, as the group about him rose to a man.

They had had enough of "that choleric old fool," they agreed among themselves. In fact, before Enoch could utter another word, they had risen and left him alone, bearing away with them their boon companion, Lamont, to the more exclusive locality of the bar, where, between two more rounds, they damned Enoch soundly for his impudence—his "unbelievable impertinence."

"If that old fossil thrusts himself upon us again," said Teddy Dryer, "I'll have him put out of the club. 'Pon my word, I will——"

"I forbid you," he cried, facing him savagely, "to drag that child's name before this company!"

"Didn't you ask him to sit down?" growled fat Billy Adams. "What in the devil did you ask him to sit down for?"

"He'd have sat down anyway, old chap," declared Teddy. "I know his kind. He's a pest. You might as well be polite to a gorilla."

"I'd like to see him try that trick in a club in Paris," put in Lamont. "He'd have a duel on his hands in twenty-four hours. Really, you've got some astounding people in America—damned if you haven't. All his tommyrot about that kid. You'd have thought I'd abducted her—" at which they all roared.

Enoch still sat before the deserted round table—alone, grim, white, and silent, the muscles of his jaw twitching, both fists clenched in his trousers pockets.

In this attitude Teddy Dryer, strolling nervously back into the big front room, found him. He was muttering to himself, his legs outstretched, sunk low in his chair, oblivious of Teddy's presence, until that thin young man slipped into the empty chair at his elbow and bravely ventured the part of a peacemaker. It would not be fair to say that Teddy was drunk, and as much of an exaggeration to infer that he was anything like half-seas-over, or well in his cups, but there was no gainsaying that his British pronunciation, gleaned from several trips to London, had lost its usual clearness and purity, and that his small eyes were as bright as a squirrel's.

"Mosh distressing, don't yer know," he began courageously, in his high-keyed, nervous little voice.

"Hadn't slight-tush idea—I mean to say—not slight-tush idea—you and he didn't hit it off together. Mosh shocking ordeal for all of ush. Rather."

Enoch did not turn his head or reply.

"Awf'ly upset 'bout it—Pierre—'pon my word he is. Horribly angry—old chap. Went off ripping mad—sensitive, yer know—slight-tush thing offends him. Awf'ly clever, Pierre—I say—you *were* mighty rough on Lamont. Rather. Besh sort in the world. Poor old Pierre wouldn't hurt a fly. Ought to really 'polgize—good idea—'polgize—eh?——"

Without a word Enoch rose, tapped the bell, and ordered a little Bourbon and seltzer.

"Put it over there," said he to the waiter, indicating a small table by the window.

"Mosh imposh'ble old brute," muttered Teddy to himself, as he left the club to lunch with a widow.

CHAPTER XIV

Matilda's coal-black cat was the first to hear it.

She had slipped up from the kitchen to the top-floor landing unseen, and had chosen a spot on the faded carpet to complete her morning toilet, warmed by a sunbeam that pierced the paint and dust of a diamond-checkered skylight—color of chocolate and clothes bluing.

She sat undisturbed at her ease, her tail curled snugly about her, while she diligently nibbled between the toes of her velvety paws. This done, she licked her strong black chest with her clean pink tongue until it shone as glossy as sable; thoroughly licked her sleek flanks, passed a moistened paw over and over her ears, scrubbing them well, reclined with exquisite grace, stretched to her full, sinuous length, her paws spread, yawned, and was busily licking and nibbling the extreme tip of her tail, when she suddenly sat upright, motionless, her ears shot forward, listening, the depths of her yellow eyes as clear as topaz.

A door had brusquely opened below, and over its threshold poured forth, rose, and reverberated up the stairs the angry voices of two men.

Crouching, her tail swishing nervously from side to side, she craned her head with slow caution between the banisters and peered down. Back in her street-

cat days she would scarcely have given the incident a second thought. Besides, in the street there was always an area gate to slip under out of danger. In the house it was different. Experienced as she was in the art of eluding her enemies, she had a horror of being cornered. She knew the exit to the roof to be closed as tight as a blind alley. In the event of pursuit she would be obliged to pass her enemy in her flight back to the kitchen. There was the pot-closet with its comforting barricade of old brooms and singed ironing-boards, and safer refuges under the damp coal-hole, and unfathomable depths in the cavernous cellar, veiled by cobwebs—but of all these she preferred Matilda's aproned lap for safety.

The row four flights below continued, punctuated with sharp retorts, vehement denials, curt threats—all unintelligible to her, save that their savage tone kept her where she was, and on the *qui vive*.

She was not the only one listening now. The hubbub below had brought Miss Ann Moulton out to her landing. She, too, was listening, fearing to be seen, peering cautiously over the banisters.

"No, sir! I tell you my client declines to settle on any such basis," declared a stranger below—a big-shouldered man with a thunderous voice. But the cat could only see his heels and the muddy rims of his trousers, and now and then his big clenched hand as he swung it angrily toward the banisters in speaking. Miss Ann could see more. She could see the breadth of his great shoulders and a fringe of curly red hair

shadowed by the brim of a brown derby with a mourning band.

"We've given you more than ample time to settle this matter, Mr. Ford," continued the stranger; "for cash, do you understand! You promised to settle up on the twentieth. That's a week ago."

"Didn't say no such thing," retorted Ebner Ford, out of view of his listeners. "What I said was I'd see she got half by the first——"

"The first, eh? We've no record of that."

"Hold on now, my friend—no use of us both talkin' at once. I said half by the first, and the other half six months from date. That's what I told her—I guess I know what I told her."

Miss Ann leaned forward with bated breath.

"See here. There's no use of your arguing this matter further," returned the other. "Unless you settle by to-morrow noon——"

"Serve me with a summons, eh? Is that it? Ain't I give you enough guarantee of good faith?"

"We do not consider your good faith a guarantee," retorted the stranger. "What my client wants is her money—all of it. I give you fair warning. You'll settle by to-morrow noon with a certified check or we'll bring the matter to court."

Ebner Ford strode forward into the hall, slamming his door shut back of him.

"You tell Mrs. Miggs," he cried, "she'll get her money all right. You tell her she'll get it on the dates I promised her, and not before. You can't bulldoze

me. You ain't the only lawyer in this here town. I've got one as smart as you, and when you come to settle up this matter you'll find it'll cost you a damned sight more'n you bargained for. You tell her that. Don't you dare insinuate I ain't treated her fairly."

A strange numbness seized Miss Ann.

"You sold my client stock," shouted back the lawyer, as he turned down the stairs, "that is worthless; that you knew at the time wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. We've got a case of embezzlement against you that's as plain as daylight. There isn't a judge on the bench that would take four minutes to decide it. Good morning."

The floor upon which the little spinster stood seemed to rise and fall beneath her trembling knees. Her frail hands gripping the railing for support grew cold. She heard the heavy tread of Mrs. Miggs's legal adviser descending the stairs; almost simultaneously the front door and Ebner Ford's closed with a slam.

For a long moment Miss Ann stood there trembling —sick and faint.

"Oh!" she gasped feebly. "Oh! Oh!" With an effort she reached her door, entered her room, and closed it.

The cat cautiously withdrew her head between the banisters. The sunbeam had vanished, a sickly chocolate-and-blue light filtered through the dusty skylight. Close to Enoch's door-mat she found a fly crawling with a broken wing. She played with it for a while, coaxed it half dead twice back to life, and, finally tir-

ing of it as a plaything, killed it with one quick stroke of her paw. Then she fell slowly asleep—a double purr in her throat, her topaz yellow eyes half closed, one white tooth showing, drowsily conscious that two fat little sparrows were chirping cheerfully on the roof.

Fear overwhelmed Miss Ann. Fear led her tottering to the nearest armchair, until she fell weak and trembling into it, pressing her cold hands to her throbbing temples. Fear stood by while she fought to control herself, to think, to reason, to catch at the smallest glimmer of hope as to Ebner Ford's honesty. The lawyer's denunciation had overweighed any vestige of doubt. It was convincing, terrible in its briefness and truth.

Ebner Ford had swindled old Mrs. Miggs!

The very tone in his voice had belied his guilt. The lawyer's thunderous denouncement still rang in her ears. "You sold my client stock that you knew at the time wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. . . . We've got a case of embezzlement against you that's as plain as daylight." Embezzlement! No man would have dared say that to another unless he had proof. Her money—their money—Jane's—half of all they possessed in the world.

She fell to weeping, her flushed, drawn cheeks buried in her hands—a sense of utter helplessness and loneliness swept over her. "Oh, Jane!" she moaned. She thanked God she was out, that she had not heard—and in the next breath prayed for her return. Could she tell her? Was it wise to tell her? And

yet she felt she must. It was their money. She must know the truth, ill as she was. Why had she been weak enough, fool enough to have believed him? Why had she not waited, thought the matter over, gone to some one for advice? There were moments when she thought she would go mad, and during these she paced up and down the room, wringing her poor, weak hands. Once or twice she felt like rushing frantically to Ebner Ford and demanding an explanation—of appealing to his sense of pity—of begging him to give her back her money. Twice she rushed to her door, but fear held her back—a dread now of him whom she had believed in. True, there have been some magnanimous and tender-hearted thieves in the world who have been known to restore certain cherished keepsakes to their victims—a watch, a ring. Ebner Ford was not one of these. He lacked even the "honor" of the professional. He belonged to that class of suave scoundrels who dare not rob men, but who confine their talent to preying upon the confidence and ignorance of helpless women, of inveigling them into their confidence, bullying them, if needs be, and railroading them to disaster.

A healthy, determined girl would have gone down and had it out with him, and failing to get satisfaction would have gone in search of a lawyer, a detective bureau, or even a policeman. Miss Ann was too timid for that. Like the cat, she had even been afraid to descend the stairs during its occupation by the enemy. There was also something else that had checked her. Eavesdropping to a woman of Miss Ann's delicate

sensibilities was dishonest, ill-bred, and vulgar. To be obliged to confess to Ebner Ford she had been listening to words not intended for her ears—a common eavesdropper—she shrank from the thought.

Neither anger nor the craving for revenge had ever entered her heart. She was capable of neither; all she was capable of was bravely living through her daily share of anxiety and patient suffering. She thought of wiring her brother to come at once; then she reasoned how undependable and useless he was; how he had mismanaged most of her affairs; how time and time again it was she who had helped him when in trouble—and Jim Moulton was always in trouble, having an inordinate distaste for real work. He still preserved, however, the remnants of a gentleman, both in his manners and his pleasant voice, though his dress was somewhat seedy; even to-day his language bespoke a man who had once been a scholar. He reduced his plain rye with plain water, which reduced him in turn to the society of the men who sold it. Out in his small Western town he dabbled along lazily in piano, real estate, and sewing-machine rentals, all under the same ceiling, next door to the best saloon in town. He was one of those who, convinced he was stronger than the rest of humanity, have tried to make a boon companion of alcohol, and survive—a feat of strength which no man yet has accomplished. Any old bartender could have told him that. No; there was no use in wiring Jim.

Now that the first effects of her shock were over,

Miss Ann grew visibly calmer. At least she ceased wringing her hands, and returned wearily to the arm-chair, where she tried to decide what must be done, what could be done. Her sister had not returned, and not a sound had broken the stillness of the house since Ebner Ford had slammed his door shut.

Suddenly a firm, rapid step on the stairs made her start. It was Enoch's. He passed her door and ascended to his own, stopping to stroke the sleepy cat on his landing, a caress which awakened her and started her purring. She had never been afraid of Enoch.

During that swift moment when Mr. Crane had passed her door, a desire had seized Miss Ann to intercept him, to pour out to him the whole story of her misery and despair, and ask his advice; and yet from sheer timidity she hesitated. She had let him pass. She felt all the more keenly this lost opportunity as she heard his door close above. He was in his room now, and if she would see him, she must go up and rap, a thing she had never done unbidden in her life. She thought of ringing for Moses, of telling him to "ask Mr. Crane if he would mind calling on Miss Moulton over a matter of immediate importance," but a haggard glance at herself in the old-fashioned mirror above her mantel wisely checked her. Had Moses seen her, he would more likely have rushed down for Matilda, telling her that Miss Ann was ill.

For another long moment she struggled with herself; then mustering up all her courage, she quickly opened her door and climbed Enoch's stairs.

"Mr. Crane," she called feebly, and knocked; at that instant she felt like running away. In reply to his sharp "Come in," she tried to turn the knob, but her courage failed her. Enoch flung open his door wide and stood staring at her haggard face.

"My dear Miss Moulton," he exclaimed, "what has happened?"

She tried to speak.

He strode across his threshold and laid his hand tenderly on her frail shoulder, and without a word gently led her into his room.

"Mr. Crane," she faltered, fighting to control herself, "I—I am in great trouble."

Enoch led her to his chair, went back, closed his door, and waited for her to grow calmer.

"You would not have come to me unless you *were* in great trouble," he ventured at length, in a kindly way, breaking the silence. "Your—your sister is—er—is not worse?" he asked.

Miss Ann shook her head.

"What, then?" he insisted firmly, seating himself quietly beside her. "You've had a shock, Miss Moulton. Won't you be frank with me?"

For a moment she buried her face in her hands and a low moan escaped her trembling lips. Then in a voice so hesitating, so painful, that he dared not interrupt her, she told him the whole pitiful story—of Ebner Ford's visit, of his persuading her to invest half of all she and her sister possessed in the world in his wringer stock, of his glowing eulogy over the House-

hold Gem's selling qualities, and old Mrs. Miggs's good fortune, of those tragic moments when she had listened on the stairs to the lawyer's denunciation, and of her fears for her money in the hands of a man she had trusted implicitly, and who had been openly denounced as an embezzler.

Through all this painful, halting confession, Enoch did not open his lips, his keen sense as a lawyer keeping him silent until her final words, "What *am* I to do?" left her mute and trembling, with a look in her eyes of positive terror.

Enoch rose with a deep sigh, a strange, hard glitter in his eyes, and stood before her, his strong hands clasped behind his back.

"The old game," he muttered tensely, gazing at the floor with a knitted brow. "Always a woman," he exclaimed, his voice rising, "a helpless, trusting woman!" he cried, with slow-gathering rage while she sat before him, the picture of desolation. "Just what I might have expected. Despicable hound! And as long as there are trusting, innocent women in this world there will always be scoundrels to rob them."

"Oh! why did I not wait—why did I not consider the matter?" she moaned.

"Such hopeful safeguards as wait and consider never enter these cases," came his brief reply. "Under the clever, steady persuasion of these scoundrels a woman of your trustful nature never waits or considers. What did you give him?"

"A check," she faltered.

"For how much?"

"My check for seven thousand five hundred dollars," she confessed faintly.

Enoch's under lip shot forward. "Ah! my poor lady!" he sighed.

"Which he informed me he deposited," she added painfully.

Enoch brightened. "Then he *has* a bank-account, has he? A bank at least. That's one favorable vestige of hope. Seven thousand five hundred, you say?"

She bent her head, twining and untwining her fingers nervously.

"Mr. Crane, what *am* I to do? My sister's welfare —her very life depends on this money."

"Do!" cried Enoch savagely. "*Do!* My dear lady, you are to leave this matter entirely in my hands. That's what you are to do."

She looked up at him breathlessly.

"Entirely!" The word rang out convincingly. "You leave Mr. Ebner Ford to me. I'll attend to that individual."

So far the thought of Sue had never entered his head; of what her stepfather's ruin and disgrace would mean to her; his one dominating interest being absorbed in the pitiful facts before him, his sense of justice to Miss Ann obliterating everything else.

"It is safe to say he cannot have spent all of your money," he went on vibrantly. "What he's got left of it he'll return to you. That I promise you."

Miss Ann drew a sharp breath of relief.

"And the rest he'll make good," cried Enoch.

"But suppose," ventured the little spinster timidly, "that he—he has not got it, Mr. Crane?"

"He'll get it," came Enoch's sharp reply.

She met the savage gleam in his eyes wonderingly—two grateful tears blurring the vision of him whom she had feared to come to, and who now seemed to be a pillar of hope.

"You tell me you feel in duty bound to tell your sister," he continued again, seating himself beside her. "Why? It would only worry her—uselessly."

"She has been too happy over our coming great good fortune," she explained. "We've made plans for the summer. These must be changed, you see. Even if I do regain the money—things will be no better for us than before."

"Better wait," replied Enoch. "I shall get at this matter at once. One thing—you are not to worry. No; I wouldn't tell your sister if I were you. Promise me you won't."

For the first time the vestige of a smile lightened her anxious face. "Then I won't tell Jane. Do you know it is the first thing I have ever kept from her in my whole life, Mr. Crane? We have never had a secret we have not shared."

He took her frail hand comfortingly in his own.

"This is no longer *your* secret," he declared. "It is mine."

For some moments she was silent.

"Mr. Crane, if you only knew how grateful I am

to you," she tried to say and keep back the tears, "how my whole heart goes out in gratefulness to you——"

"If there is any one who ought to be grateful," he returned, with a slow smile, "it is I—for your having come to me in time," he added reassuringly. "One thing," he continued seriously, "you must be extremely careful of—not to give him, should you meet him, the slightest suspicion that you know anything—that you doubt his honesty. What I intend to do is to interview this individual to-morrow; by to-morrow night I should have better news for you. There! now you are to think no more about it. Go to your room, my dear lady, and try and meet your sister as if nothing had happened. If you have to tell her a fib—do so. I'll be responsible for it."

Again he smiled, and this time he pressed her frail little hand warmly, and helped her gently to her feet.

"Oh, Mr. Crane!" she breathed. "With that lovely stepdaughter—and his poor wife—how my heart goes out to them!"

"Only two more of his victims," was Enoch's grim reply. "That dear child, and worse, that poor mother who is married to him, believing in him—um!—a difficult question."

Again he laid his hand tenderly on her frail shoulder as he opened his door.

"You are not to worry," he repeated, as she went down the stairs.

Miss Ann smiled back at him bravely. Enoch

waited until he saw her reach her door, and for some moments stood listening. Having made up his mind that Miss Jane was still out, he returned to his room, wrote a brief note, and rang for Moses.

There were but five lines in the missive, but they said much to Ebner Ford. They informed him that Enoch might be exceedingly interested in his laundry stock, and that if it was still at par, he would be pleased to see him without fail at his office in South Street the following morning at ten o'clock.

Ebner Ford had passed a bad quarter of an hour with himself after the lawyer's departure. Finally he had sat himself down at that roll-top desk of his with its worthless contents, and began drumming with his long fingers, trying to sharpen his wits as to the best way out of the matter, and reluctantly coming to the conclusion that the only means of silencing old Mrs. Miggs and her attorney was to settle the eighteen hundred dollars she claimed, and to do this he would be obliged to pay her out of his lucky nest-egg—Miss Ann's money. He was turning over in his mind this unfortunate turn in his affairs, when Moses rapped and handed him Enoch's note.

"Well, say!" he exclaimed, brightening into a broad grin as he read it. "Interested at last, is he? That saves my bacon. He'll pay for Mrs. Miggs."

CHAPTER XV

South Street had more to do with seafaring men than lawyers. It was a strange thoroughfare along which to have searched for a legal adviser. Enoch's office, which we have already peeped into, and which so rarely saw its owner, lay tucked away as snug as a stowaway in the old building he owned, sandwiched in between two even older structures, two long-established ship-chandler's warehouses, whose lofts were pungent with the odor of tarred rope, and whose iron-bound thresholds led to dark interiors, where one could be accommodated with anything from a giant anchor down to a vessel's port and starboard lights.

A raw, cold street in the short winter days, taking the brunt of blizzards and cruel winds, whirling snow and biting cold, fog-swept, or shimmering in heat, greasy and roughly paved. A street to stand rough knocks from rough men, who owned the clothes they stood in, and little else; clothes in which they worked, drank, and quarrelled, joked, and swore, shipped on long voyages, and returned; men whose sentiment was indelibly vouched for by the ballet-girl tattooed on their brawny arms, and whose love of country was guaranteed by the Union Jack or the Stars and Stripes —often by both—pricked in indigo and vermilion on

their solid chests and further embellished with hearts, true-lovers' knots, and anchors.

It was an odoriferous, happy-go-lucky sort of street, where things had an odor all their own. Bundles of rawhides lay stacked on greasy platforms. Drafty interiors held stout casks of oil, gallons of the best spar varnish, sails, pulley-blocks, and tow for calking —scores of ship necessities in solid brass and galvanized iron made for rough usage in all kinds of weather —capstans, rudders, cleats, robust lanterns, reliable compasses, their needles steadily pointing north—and a saloon within reach of every reeling sailor.

It was the street of the stranger from far-off lands, of able seamen whose sturdy boots had knocked about the worst sections of Port Said, Marseilles, Singapore, or Bilbao—a street where honest ships poked their bowsprits up to its very edge, a long, floating barrier, a maze of masts, spars, and rigging, of vessels safe in port, whose big hulls lay still in the flotsam and jetsam and swill of the harbor, where the hungry, garrulous gulls wheeled, gossiped, and gorged themselves like scavengers.

There was an atmosphere of adventure, of the freedom of the sea along its length, that the staid old business streets back of it could not boast of; that charm, sordid as it was, that holds the sailor and his nickels in port, close to his quay, for he rarely ventures as far inland as the city's midst. At night jewels of lights hung in the maze of rigging, others gleamed forth a broad welcome from the saloons. When these

went out, only the jewels in the rigging remained, leaving the old, busy street of the day dark and deserted, save for an occasional prowler of the night—or a stray cat foraging for food.

There were women, too—fat ogresses in cheap finery, skeletons in rouge and rags, their ratlike eyes ever watchful for their prey—and now and then some shuffling human derelict, those who have no definite destination, neither friends nor home nor bed nor bunk to go to; worse off even than the poor sailor in port, robbed, cajoled, flattered, tempted, and always enticed, down to his last nickel.

None knew them better than Enoch. Many an empty pocket he brightened with a coin. Others he helped out of more serious difficulties. Had he accepted all the chattering monkeys and profane parrots he had been offered from time to time in grateful remembrance, he would have had enough to have started a bird-store.

It was along this street that Ebner Ford picked his way the next morning to Enoch's office, eager for the interview, and never more confident of selling him enough of his laundry stock, to be rid of old Mrs. Miggs and her lawyer forever.

At five minutes to ten his lean figure might have been seen dodging among the trucking, slipping around crates and bales, and only stopping now and then to verify the address on Enoch's note.

So elated was he over the prospect of the interview that he entered Enoch's building whistling a lively

tune, continued snatches of it up in the shaky elevator, insisted he had "an appointment at ten with Mr. Crane," and was led half-way down the corridor by the Irish janitor to Enoch's modest door, which he opened briskly with a breezy "Well, neighbor, ain't a minute late, am I?" and with a laugh, ending in a broad, friendly grin, shot out his long hand in greeting.

Simultaneously Enoch swung sharply around in his desk chair with a savage glance; not only did he refuse the proffered hand, but left his visitor staring at him bewildered.

"Sit down!" snapped Enoch.

"Well, say!" drawled Ford. "Ain't you a little mite nervous this mornin', friend?"

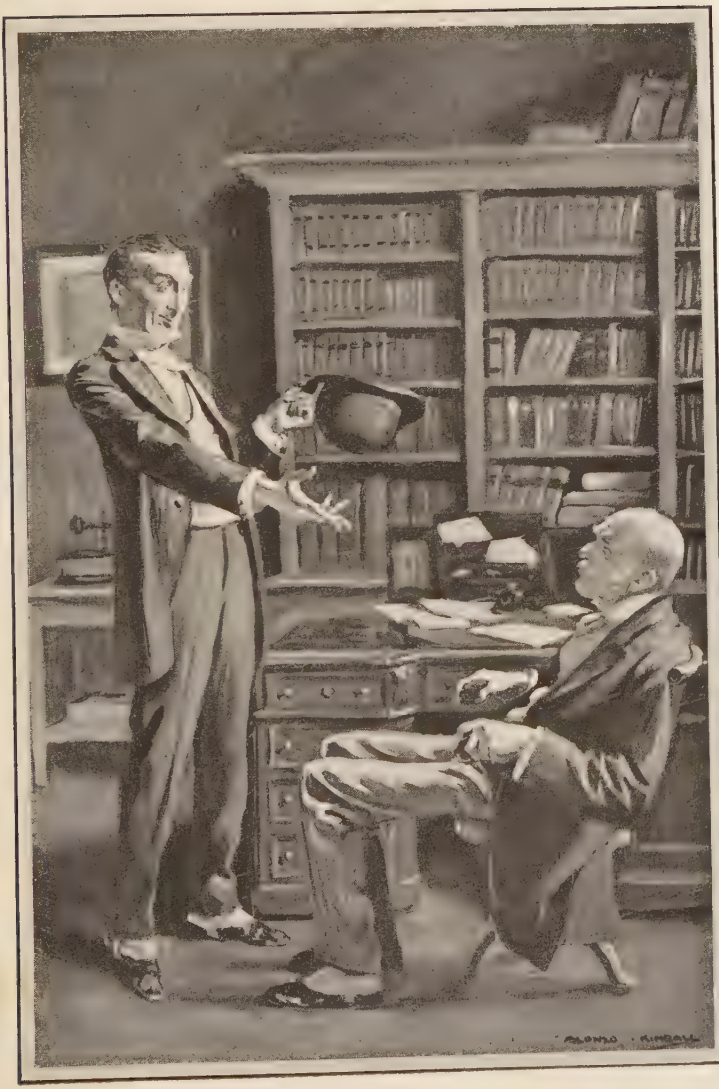
"Sit down!" repeated Enoch curtly, indicating the empty chair beside his desk. "Do not delude yourself for an instant, sir, that you are here to interest me in your laundry stock."

"Well, that beats all," declared Ford. "You seemed to be all-fired interested in your note. That's what you said, wa'n't it?"

"I've been enlightened as to the precise value of that laundry stock of yours, sir," came Enoch's sharp reply—"your gilt-edged securities relative to the Household Gem as well."

Ford started.

"Have, eh? Well, it's at par. That's what you wanted—er—that's what you said you wanted," he blurted out, slinking into the empty chair and fumbling his dusty derby nervously.



"Well, neighbor, ain't a minute late, am I?"

"Par!" snapped Enoch. "It's at zero, and you know it. Below zero, I should say, judging from all reports." And before Ford could reply: "Let us come to the point. You are in arrears for your rent, sir."

Ford gaped at him in amazement.

"I refer, sir, to your apartment in Waverly Place; with the exception of your first month's payment, you have not paid a dollar's worth of rent since you moved in, not a penny, sir; rents are made to be paid, sir, not avoided. You have not even made the slightest excuse or apology to your landlord over the delay. Any other landlord would have ousted you from the premises."

Ford laid his dusty derby on the desk, planting his long hands over his bony knees, his small eyes regarding Enoch with a curious expression.

"Oh, I haven't, have I?" he exclaimed. "Wouldn't like to take a bet on it, would you?"

"No, sir!" cried Enoch, squaring back in his seat. "You have not, not a penny of it. Can you deny it?"

"What's my rent got to do with you?" returned Ford. "You seem to be almighty interested in other folks' rents."

"I've let you run on," continued Enoch firmly, "so far without troubling you."

"Oh, *you have*, have you? Well, say, you take the cake! Talk as if you owned the place."

Enoch sprang out of his chair, his underlip shot forward.

"I do," said he.

"You what?" gasped Ford, opening his small eyes wide. "You don't mean to tell me that there house is *yourn?*"

"Yes, sir—it's mine, from cellar to roof. If you want further proof of it," he cried, wrenching open a drawer of his desk, fumbling among some papers and flinging out on his desk the document of sale in question, stamped, sealed, and witnessed, "there it is."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!"

"Jiggered or not, sir, your lease is up! You are behind in your rent, and out you go."

"Well, hold on now; I guess we can fix up this little matter," returned Ford, with a sheepish grin. "Hadn't no idea it was *you,* friend, who owned the house, or I wouldn't have kept you waitin'."

"I can assure you," retorted Enoch, "there is no friendship concerned in this matter. You will desist, sir, in calling me your friend; that phase of our acquaintanceship never existed."

For a moment neither spoke.

"See here, neighbor," Ford resumed by way of explanation, and in a tone that was low and persuasive, "with our increasin' business I've been under some mighty heavy expenses lately; new machinery has exacted heavy payments. Our long list of canvassers on the road's been quite an item in salaries. S'pose I was to let you have a little of our gilt-edged at par, as collateral for the rent?"

"Stop, sir!" cried Enoch. "Do you take me for a fool? Your laundry stock is not worth the paper it

is printed on—wasn't at the time you sold it to Mrs. Miggs." He slammed his closed fist down on the desk. "There is not a judge on the bench that would take four minutes to decide a case against you for embezzlement. It's as plain as daylight."

Ford stared at him dumfounded. He started to speak, but Enoch cut him short in a towering rage.

"You've swindled my friend, Miss Ann Moulton, as well," he cried. "You took seven thousand five hundred dollars from her in payment for your worthless stock—from a helpless lady—half she owned in the world, you despicable hound—from a helpless woman." Ford reddened. "Half, I say—from the support of a sister who is ill—a poor, pitiful wreck of a woman dying of consumption."

"Oh! Now see here, Crane—go slow—let me explain."

"Systematically swindled her, robbed her, talked her into it—persuaded her until she gave you her check. Your kind stop at nothing." His voice rang out over the half-open transom and down the corridor. Ford sat gripping his chair.

"I tell you, Miss Moulton ain't lost a penny of her money," he stammered. "What I done for her I done out of neighborly kindness."

"Stop, sir! Don't lie to me. Answer me one question. How much of Miss Moulton's money have you got left?"

Ford glowered at him in silence.

"Answer me! How much have you got left? I

intend to get at the bottom of this damnable business. What you've got left of Miss Moulton's money, you'll return to her."

"Why, there ain't a penny of it missin'," declared Ford blandly, paling visibly.

"You call a credit in your bank of five thousand two hundred and some odd dollars, nothing missing? Where's the rest?"

"Who told you that?" cried Ford, half rising, with a sullen gleam in his eyes.

"Your bank!" cried Enoch sharply. "Its president, my old friend, John Mortimer, told me. Under criminal circumstances such information is not difficult to obtain."

Enoch drove his hands in his pockets and started to pace the room. Ford was the first to break the silence that ensued. His voice had a whine in it, and most of the color had left his lean cheeks.

"You don't want to ruin me, do yer?" he said thickly.

"Ruin you! No one can ruin you! You were born ruined! Answer me—where's the rest of Miss Moulton's money?"

"Spent," faltered Ford. "You don't suppose a man can live on nothin', do yer? We all have our little ups and downs in business. Fluctuations, they call 'em. Why, the biggest men with the biggest business acumen, in the biggest business deals in the world have 'em. I ain't no exception. That's what all business is—chuck full of little ups and downs.

No man ever complains when business is boomin'—only boomin' is never regular. Good times pay for the bad. A feller has to have grit to weather 'em. Then, if we didn't risk nothin', we wouldn't have nothin'. What does the Bible say? Sow and ye shall reap."

His voice faltered weakly.

"See here," returned Enoch. "If I've got the slightest pity for you, you personally are not responsible for it. Your stepdaughter is adorable. Your wife is an honest woman."

"There ain't no better," declared Ford meekly, moistening his lips with a long finger that shook. "Girlie, too; her ideas ain't mine, but I ain't got nothin' agin her."

"Good gad, sir! I should hope not. You have not a thought in common! No dearer child ever lived! The very soul of honesty and sincerity—a joy to my house, sir! A joy to every one who has come in contact with her. That you should have so little love and respect for her as to have acted as you have is astounding!"

"Girlie thinks an awful lot of you," returned Ford, heaving a sigh, Enoch's tender allusion to his stepdaughter bringing with it his first ray of hope. "Ever stopped to think," he went on, with sudden courage, "what this hull business will mean to her when she knows it? See here, neighbor, you're human, I take it. 'Tain't human in no man to crowd another feller to ruin like you're crowdin' me. It'll like to kill my

wife when she hears it. As for girlie—well, you know what it'll mean to her—her little home gone, after all I've tried to do to make it pleasant for 'em both. S'pose I was to tell you I'll make good—only you've got to give me time; that I'll pay the rent and give every cent back to Miss Moulton—square her up as clean as a whistle."

Enoch turned sharply.

"On what, I'd like to know? And when? Out of the chimeric profits of your vast laundry business, I suppose?"

"Hold on, neighbor, not so fast. I ain't told you all. S'pose you was to give me a couple of weeks' time. I've got a little property I've been hangin' on to up-State. Four neat buildin' lots on the swellest outskirts of Troy—Fairview Park, they call it—neatest lookin' place you ever see; gas and water piped right from the city. I've been waitin' for the right party, but if I've got to sell now, Crane, I'll do it. At the lowest figger they'll square up all these little differences between us—Mrs. Miggs and Miss Moulton will get their satisfy, you'll get your rent, and girlie and Emma won't know no more than if it never happened."

"You'll pay Miss Moulton first," declared Enoch firmly. "I am not concerned with Mrs. Miggs's affairs. Her own lawyer can attend to them; as for the rent, I wish you to understand plainly, that if it was not for your wife and stepdaughter——"

He ceased speaking. His teeth clenched. There

was little doubt in Ford's mind that the worst was over; that Enoch was softening. He already felt more at his ease, and for the first time leaned back in his chair, and with the vestige of a forced smile crossed his long legs, feeling that half the battle was won. What he exactly intended to do he had not the slightest idea. Mrs. Miggs's lawyer had given him until noon. It was now past eleven. He decided to wire him: "Sending check to-morrow." Meanwhile Enoch had resumed his pacing before him, muttering to himself words that even Ebner Ford's quick ears did not catch.

"How about this property of yours?" cried Enoch with renewed heat. "Your four lots in Troy? You are rather vague, sir, about their value. This Fairview Park you speak of? Anything there but gas and water-pipes and a chance for the right party, as you say to come along? Any railroad or street-car communication that would persuade any one to build?"

Ford's lean jaws, to which the color had now returned, widened in a condescending smile over Enoch's abject ignorance.

"Fairview Park!" he exclaimed with quick enthusiasm. "Why, neighbor, it's a bonanza! Has any one *built* on it? Well, I guess yes! Take the Jenkins mansion alone—the candy king. Mansard roof alone cost a fortune, to say nothin' of a dozen other prominent homes—brand-new and up to date—not a fence in the hull park. Everybody neighborly. Course,

soon as we get our railroad-station things will boom. Quick transportation to the city and plenty of fresh air for the children. Come to think of it, I was lucky to have bought when I did. Got in on the ground floor, 'twixt you and me, and ain't never regretted it. Big men like Jenkins have been pesterin' me a dozen times to sell, but I've held on, knowin' I could double my money. Property has already advanced fifty per cent out there in the last few years, friend, and is——"

"Stop, sir!" cried Enoch. "I believe we have already discussed the question of friendship between us."

"Oh, well now, see here, Crane."

"In future, sir, you will address me as Mr. Crane. I trust that is clear to you, Mr. Ford."

"Well, suit yourself. What's the use of our bein' so all-fired unfriendly? Neighbors, ain't we? Livin' under the same roof!"

"You are living under *my* roof, sir! Not I under *yours!* That you continue to live there is purely due to the presence of a woman who has had the misfortune to marry you, and a stepdaughter—thank Heaven, she is not your daughter—whom I hope, with all my heart, some day will be rid of you forever. You ask me for two weeks' time. Very well, you shall have it. I trust you fully realize your situation. Remember, I shall hold you to your promise in regard to Miss Moulton. Mr. Ford, I have nothing more to say to you—good morning."

Ford picked up his dusty derby slowly from the desk, and as slowly rose to his feet.

Enoch, with his hands plunged deep in his trousers pockets, stood grim and silent, gazing irritably at the floor; if he saw Ford's outstretched hand reach toward him slowly across the desk between them, he did not move a muscle in recognition.

"Well, so long," ventured Ford.

"Good morning," repeated Enoch gruffly, without raising his head.

"Well, now, that's too bad," drawled Ford, slowly withdrawing his hand. "I was just thinkin' if you and me was to go down for a little straight Bourbon you'd feel better."

Enoch jerked up his head.

"Drink with you!" he exclaimed sharply. "Drink with *you!*" His keen eyes blazed.

"Well, now, that wouldn't hurt the quality of the whiskey any, would it?" grinned Ford. "Sorter smooth down the remainin' little rough places between us—warm us both up into a more friendly understandin', seein' I've agreed to do for you all any man can do for another—give you my bona-fide guarantee."

Enoch sprang forward, his clenched hands planted on his desk, his face livid.

"Get out, sir!" he shouted. For an instant his voice stopped in his throat, then broke out with a roar: "Out, sir! Out! When you have anything more substantial to offer me than an invitation to a rum mill I will listen to you."

Before this volley of rage Ford backed away from him, backed out through the door that Enoch swung open to him, and the next instant slammed in his face with a sound that reverberated through the whole building.

Any other man but Ebner Ford would have turned down the corridor, dazed and insulted. As for Enoch's door, it was not the first that had been slammed in his face. He could recall a long list of exits in his business career that were so alike in character they had ceased to make any serious impression upon him. His rule had been to allow time for the enraged person to cool off, and to tackle him again at the earliest opportunity—preferably after luncheon, when experience had taught him men were always in a more genial and approachable humor.

All of his past interviews, however, had been trivial compared to this with Enoch. He had entered his office keyed up with confidence and exuberance, and had backed out of it under the fury of a man who had laid bare his character and every secret detail of what he chose to call his "own private affairs"; bad enough when he arrived but ten times worse now as he realized the man he had to deal with.

Three things, however, were comforting. Enoch's affirmed respect for his wife and stepdaughter in regard to the overrent; his open, almost paternal affection for Sue, and his word that he would give him two weeks in which to settle with Miss Moulton. As for

old Mrs. Miggs, he decided to send her a check for half the amount out of Miss Ann's money and see what would happen.

That he drank his Bourbon alone on the first corner he reached, the bartender agreeably changing another one of Miss Ann's dollars, only helped to sharpen his wits. He stood on the sawdusted floor of the saloon, at the bar, hemmed in between the patched elbows of a boatswain's mate and a common sailor, ruminating over the overwhelming events of the morning.

Now that he was out of Enoch's drastic presence and voice, he felt at his ease, and more so when he had laid another one of Miss Ann's dimes on the bar, freshly wiped from the beer spill, and ordered a second Bourbon.

"Thinks a heap of girlie," he mused. "Wa'n't so savage about the rent, after all." As he thought of Sue there flashed through his mind an idea, so sudden that he started, and his small eyes sparkled, so perfectly logical to him that he grinned and wondered why, during the whole of the strenuous interview, he had not thought of it before.

Instead, he had clutched at the idea of "Fairview Park," his entire acquaintance with its existence dating from a real-estate advertisement he had read in a newspaper several weeks old, he adding to its popularity and magnificence by capping the mythical mansion of the candy king with a mansard roof worth a fortune, and further embellishing its undesirable acres with the hope of a railroad-station. Only the air

changed in Fairview Park; the rest had lain a flat failure for years, the home of crows and the sign-boards they avoided, announcing the best cigar and the cheapest soap.

That Enoch would investigate the truth of his statements gave him little apprehension. He was certain he had convinced him of his good faith, building lots and all. What elated him now was his sudden idea—an inspiration—and his first step in that direction took him out of the saloon and on his way to see Lamont.

On a crowded corner in Fulton Street a newsboy bawled in his passing ear:

"Here yer are! Git the extry, boss! All about the big club scandal——"

Ford stopped and glanced at the head-line, "Millionaire Slaps Clubman's Face," and below it saw the face in question.

It was Jack Lamont's.

CHAPTER XVI

Gossip, that imaginative, swift-footed, and altogether disreputable slave of Hearsay, who runs amuck, distributing his pack of lies from one telltale tongue to the next eager ear, rich in clever exaggerations, never at a loss for more—far-reaching as contagion, and heralding all else but the truth—seldom affects the poor.

In certain congested, poverty-stricken quarters, it is the basis of their easy, garrulous language, and as current as their slang or their profanity. Those who are both poor, humble, and meek are seldom mentioned—since they do nothing to attract attention. They may be said to be philosophers. Gossip, stealthy as the incoming tide, sweeps wide; like the sea's long, feathery fingers, it spreads with a rapidity that is amazing. Gossip runs riot in a village. It tears down streets, runs frantically up lanes, and into houses, short-cuts to the next, flies around corners, climbs stairs, is passed over neighbors' fences, seeks out the smallest nooks, is whispered through cracks and keyholes, and even bawled down cellars—lest there should be any one left below ground who has not heard the news.

Among those whom riches have thrown laughing into the lap of luxury and elected to the pinnacles of

the most expensive society, women who move in those fashionable and exclusive circles, where every detail of their private lives, from their gowns and jewels to their marriages and divorces, the press so kindly keep the public informed of—over these gossip hovers like an ill-omened forerunner of scandal.

Scandal is the prime executioner; when scandal strikes it lays the naked truth bare to the bone—stark, hideous, undeniable. It takes a brave woman to stand firm in the face of scandal. Some totter and fall at the first blow; others struggle to their feet and survive. Some hide themselves.

There is something so frank and open about scandal that it becomes terrible—merciless and terrifying in its exposure of plain fact. The hum of gossip may be compared to the mosquitoes, whose sting is trivial; scandal strikes as sudden as a thunderbolt; it shatters the four walls of a house with a single blow, and turns a search-light on its victim in the ruins.

That "Handsome Jack" Lamont should have said what he did to pretty Mrs. Benton as they met by chance coming out of the theatre, and that pretty Mrs. Benton's husband, having gone himself to-night in search of his carriage, discovered it far down the line, signalled to his coachman, made his way again through the waiting group of women in theatre wraps and their escorts, and reached his wife's side at the precise moment to overhear Lamont's quick question to her, caught even her smiling, whispered promise to him—was unfortunate. The attack followed.

Before either were aware of his presence, Benton struck Lamont a stinging blow from behind, knocking off his hat. As he turned, Benton struck him again—two very courageous blows for so short a little man, red with rage and round as a keg. Pretty Mrs. Benton, who was tall and slim—an exquisite blonde—screamed; so did several women in the group about them, falling back upon their escorts for protection—but by this time, Lamont had the enraged little man by the shoulders and was shaking him like a rat, denouncing his attack as an outrage, demanding an apology, explaining to him exactly what he said, that nobody but a fool could have construed it otherwise, that he was making himself ridiculous. Pretty Mrs. Benton also explaining, and both being skilful liars in emergency, the dramatic incident closed, to the satisfaction of the two stalwart policemen, who had strolled up, swinging their long night-sticks—recognized Benton, the millionaire, as being too wealthy to arrest, and Lamont as an old friend of their chief at headquarters—dispersed the crowd with a "G'wan now about yer business"; waited until the lady and her still furious husband were safe in their carriage; shouted to the coachman to move on, and a moment later followed Lamont around the corner, where he explained the affair even more to their satisfaction. In their plain brogue they thanked him, and expressed their admiration over the skill with which he had pinioned the excited arms of the little man; that admiration which is common among men at prize-fights

when the better of the two antagonists refuses to give the final knockout to the weaker man.

"Sure ye had him from the first!" they both agreed.

It had all happened quickly. By the time Lamont left the two patrolmen the theatre was dark and the doors locked for the night.

Let us discreetly draw down the dark-blue silk shades of the Benton equipage upon the scenes that ensued on their way home. Let us refrain from raising them even an inch to catch sight of the pretty face of the now thoroughly indignant though tearful lady, or the continued tirade of her lord and master, as they rumbled over the cobbles.

Was she not lovely and convincing in her grief—and —and purely in the right? How preposterous to think otherwise! To disagree with an angel! Heavens! Was she not blond and adorable? Bah! How silly husbands are! What a tempest in a teapot they make of nothing—to misconstrue the simplest and most innocent of questions and the most natural of whispered replies into high treason! Did not Benton owe Mr. Lamont the most abject of apologies? Of course. He owed a still deeper apology to Mrs. Benton for "mortifying her beyond words." Innocence in the hands of a brute! A lily in the grip of a brigand! She who had given all to him—her love—her devotion—could he doubt her for an instant? Had he ever doubted *her?* Had she ever been jealous of *him?* How lucky he was to have a wife like her.

Henceforth he could go to the theatre alone—forever —nightly—as long as he lived—and stay there until he died.

Passionately, with a sharp cry of contempt, she slipped off her marriage ring, and flung it away forever on the floor of the brougham, where he groped for it out of breath, and returned it to her imploringly, seizing her clenched hand and begging her to let him restore it to its rightful finger. That he restored it finally came as a reward for a score of humble promises, including his entire belief in her innocence, and the meekest of confessions that his undying love for her alone had been responsible for his uncontrollable jealousy. Her slim, satin-slippered foot still kept tapping in unison to her beating heart, but victory was hers. It shone in her large blue eyes, in the warm glow overspreading her delicate cheeks, her lovely throat and neck. Her whole mind exulted as she thought of "Jack." How she would pour out to him in a long letter all of her pent-up heart. She could hardly wait for morning to come in which to write it, upon the faintly scented paper he loved, and which he could detect in his box at the club among a dozen others by its violet hue.

After all, what had Lamont said to have raised all this tragic row? To have been struck like a common ruffian in the public street, before the eyes of people he knew, and several of whom he had dined with—or hoped to—and for what?

Nine of the simplest words, all told, were what Ben-

ton had overheard, and not a syllable more. Lamont's quick question, "At three, then?" and her smiling, whispered promise: "No—at three-thirty, impatient child."

What could have been more innocent? Has a gentleman no right to hurriedly ask the time—and be sweetly chided for his impatience?

Far better had he refrained and discreetly sent her a note by some trusted servant to her dressmaker's (for he kept tally of her "fittings")—far better—one of those brief notes, whose very telltale briefness reads in volumes. They are always typical of serious affairs.

Alas! the affair had only begun. The two patrolmen recounted the incident on their return from their "beat" to the sergeant at the desk, interspersing their narrative with good-humored laughter and some unprintable profanity.

"'Twas *him*," they said, referring to Benton. They expatiated on his riches and the good looks of his wife, emphasized their own magnanimity in refusing to arrest, and covered Lamont's level, handsome head with a wreath of glory—all to the delight of a young reporter hanging around for an instalment, and eager to "make good" with his night editor.

In little less than two hours the whole story was on the press—that most powerful gossiper in the world! Needless to say, it printed the story to a nicety—a giant high-speed press, capable of thousands of copies an hour. It even took the trouble to fold them in great packages, which were carried on the shoulders of

men and thrown into wagons, that dashed off to waiting trains, which in turn rushed them to distant cities.

It made the young reporter's reputation, but it nearly ruined pretty Mrs. Benton's, and brought Jack Lamont before the public eye by a wide-spread publicity he had never dreamed of.

Needless to say, too, that the unfortunate lady did not write the note the next morning; she became prostrated and lay in a darkened room, and could see no one by her physician's orders—not even her enraged husband.

Let us pass over the heartrending details which ensued—of her return to her mother; of their long talks of a separation, providing it could be obtained without pecuniary loss to the injured daughter. Both of them, you may be sure, held Benton wholly responsible—or, rather, irresponsible, being unfit for any woman to live with, owing to his ungovernable jealousy.

Poor Phyllis! She was born much too beautiful, with her delicate skin like a tea-rose, and her fine, blond hair, that reached nearly to her knees, and when up and undulated left little stray wisps at the nape of her graceful, white neck. She should never have married a man like Benton—round like his dollars. What a stunning pair she and Jack Lamont would have made! But what a dance he would have led her! Lucky he was to have the wife he had, who forgave him everything and paid his debts and lived her own life, which was eminently respectable, firm in her devotion to her charities, and as set in her opinions

at her women's clubs—a small, pale woman with large, dark eyes—a woman whom he seldom saw, never breakfasted with, and rarely lunched or dined with at home, since he came and went as he pleased; now and then they met at a reception, now and then at a tea, his cheery "Hello, Nelly," forcing from her a "Hello, Jack," that convinced every one around them they were still the best of friends. Even the account of this latest affair of his in the papers did not surprise her. For a day or two she was annoyed by reporters, but her butler handled them cleverly, and they went away, no wiser for having come. Not a word of reproach to her husband passed Mrs. Lamont's lips. If there was any money needed over the affair, she knew Jack would come to her; further than that, she refused to let the matter trouble her.

Nothing could have been more convincing than Lamont's side of the affair in the afternoon papers. This remarkable document from the pen of a close club friend of his—a talented journalist—was satisfactory in the extreme. It not only evoked public sympathy for the injured lady, but put her insanely jealous husband in the light of a man who was not responsible for his actions, and should not be allowed to walk abroad, unless under the care of an attendant. As for Mr. Lamont, he had done nothing or said a word that might have been misconstrued to warrant so scandalous an attack. The same thing might have happened to any gentleman whom common courtesy had led to speak to a woman of his acquaintance on

leaving the theatre, and further went on to state that "Mr. Lamont's many virtues were vouched for by his host of friends; his fairness as a sportsman, and his popularity in society being too widely known to need further comment." Lamont remained sober until he had read it; then he went on the worst spree in ten years.

It is erroneous to suppose that men of birth and breeding seek luxurious places to amuse themselves in. They often seek the lowest. To a worldly and imaginative mind like Lamont's nothing in his own strata of society amused him at a time like this. A gentleman may become a vagabond for days and still remain a gentleman. Men are complex animals. The animal is simpler, wholly sincere; it possesses but one nature; man has two—his intellectual and his savage side—distinct one from the other, as black from white. Women have but one nature; the ensemble of their character changes only in rare exceptions. They are what they are born to be, and remain so. That this nature "goes wrong" is erroneous. Psychologically, it goes right. It reverts to its true nature at the first real opportunity. Birth and breeding have very little to do with it. Environment may often be likened to a jail, and since it is the nature born of some women to crave to escape—they do. A woman who is fundamentally saintly remains a saint. She has no *desire* to be otherwise. Temptation leaves the really good alone.

Lamont, however, was a man, and a worldly man at that, a man whose eyes were accustomed to gaze calmly at those illusive jewels called pleasure, with their variegated facets of light, and to choose the one whose rays most pleased him. Strange, is it not, that red has always stood for evil?

This worst spree in ten years of his should rightly have begun with him at Harry Hill's, at Crosby and Houston Streets, for he had been a familiar figure there, and a keen enthusiast over the boxing. Hill's white front screening the old room, with its boxes, its women, its old bar down-stairs and its prize-ring above, had been closed by the police. Such places, however, as Donovan's, Dempsey's, and Regan's were still wide open to receive him. Of the three he preferred Regan's, and, indeed, nearly the whole of his five days' spree was spent there, down in that sordid basement, with its steep iron stairs, its bouncer, its famous banjo player, accompanied by a small Sunday-school melodeon; its women, its whiskey, and its smoke. Not a breath of scandal ever entered the place, save when it was permanently closed at last for a murder. Gentlemanly deportment was rigorously exacted, and the first signs of trouble meant a throw-out. It was a fine place to be forgotten in and to forget the world above ground. This place, like Bill Monahan's, had its small virtues; Bill Monahan himself never touched liquor, his clean pot of tea, which he drank from liberally, being always simmering within his reach.

Lamont had not a single enemy at Regan's. He

spent his money freely to the twang of one of the best banjo players the world has ever known. That a gentleman of so much innate refinement should have chosen a dive to amuse himself in—a place that reeked with the odor of evil, and through whose heat, and smoke, and glaring lights the faces of so many lost souls stared at one like spectres—seems incredible. Where would you have him go? Back into his own dull environment? Free and drunk as he was? Nonsense! He would have become conspicuous. No one was ever conspicuous at Regan's. Hell has no favorites. The place had not sunk so low as to have clean sawdust on its floors. It was run rigorously for coin. Its waiters, silent, experienced, and attentive; its women, confidential in the extreme; and the eye of the bouncer on and over them all. The bartender, the melodeon, and the banjo player did the rest. It was they who kept up its *esprit*—changed an old hard-luck story into new luck, tears into laughter, and desperation into a faint glimmer of hope. In the lower world everything is so well understood, there are no novelties —stale love—stale beer—stale everything.

The last we saw of Ebner Ford was when he glanced at the extra announcing the scandal. He who rarely bought a paper, bought this. He handed the newsboy a nickel, waited impatiently for his change, and leaped up the Elevated stairs, reading the account.

He read as he ran, glancing at Lamont's portrait framed in an oval of yacht pennants and polo-mallets,

with a horseshoe for luck crowning them all. He threw another nickel on the worn sill of the ticket window, received a coupon from a haggard ticket-seller, and kept on reading while he waited on the drafty station at Fulton Street for an up-town train. Nothing could have happened to better further his idea. Was not his friend Lamont in trouble? What better excuse to call on him and express his sympathy? He began as he boarded the train to frame up what he would say to him. "Sympathy first and business afterward," he said to himself. How he would come to him gallantly as a friend—slap him on the back and cheer him up. "Help him ferget—all them little worries"—and having gotten him sufficiently cheered, talk to him man to man over his little scheme. He told himself that there was not a chance in a thousand of its failing; that Lamont could not very well refuse him. "Takin' all things considered," he mused, as he hung to a strap—"dead stuck on girlie, that's certain—one of them little bargains that a feller like him will snap at."

He began to wish that it was *he* instead of Lamont who had gotten into so much free print. "Wouldn't have cost me a cent," he reasoned, "and given me more solid advertisement than I could have bought fer a thousand dollars. Ain't nothin' like publicity to bring a feller into the public eye."

All New York was reading the account. Thousands of others would read it all over the country, he declared. He decided he had better go to Lamont's club first,

in the hope of finding him, and failing in this, to his house. Then he thought he had "better go home first and see Emma, and brush up a little," and with this in view left the train at 9th Street and walked rapidly across town to Waverly Place.

In the meantime Enoch had left his office; he, too, had bought a paper, which he read grimly, with mingled anger and disgust. Later came Lamont's side of the affair in the afternoon edition. This Enoch read, taking it for precisely what it was worth, his anger rising as he thought of Sue and of her acquaintance with a scoundrel. After all said and done, the incident that had happened before the theatre was of slight interest to the public; thousands of them kindled their kitchen fires with the whole of it the next day, and having cooked breakfast over the cheerful flames, forgot that the unfortunate incident had ever happened.

A few women of Lamont's acquaintance still gossiped over it to their intimate friends at tea and along Fifth Avenue—and forgave him. The butler at Lamont's residence opened the door wide as usual, grave as the statue of an illustrious citizen, and as for Mrs. Lamont, she resumed her philosophic life as well.

"Handsome Jack" was drinking heavily somewhere —no one knew where; all they knew was that he had not returned; whom he hobnobbed with he had only a vague idea of himself. The mornings were the worst, the afternoons grew better, and he really only began

to live steadily at midnight and beyond into those stale hours of the morning, until the chill of gray daylight sent the best banjo player's best banjo into its worn leather case, closed the little Sunday-school melodeon, locked it, and sent its tired player to bed for the day, sent the scrub-woman to her knees, and gave the bouncer a well-earned rest with the rising sun. Possibly the only woman who knew where Lamont was was "Diamond" May, a large blonde, whose language was as refined as she could make it for the occasion, and whose quick, gray eyes were those of a retired thief's.

She called him "Jack"—but mostly "deary," "listen" and "deary" occurring as frequently in her vocabulary as "and" or "the." Jack swore by her after midnight. She was proud of him, being a gentleman. She was proud, too, of being in the presence of his money and his crest ring, which to her vouched for both their respectabilities.

Luck comes to a man without the slightest warning. Strangely enough, it is the result after repeated failure. Luck arrives when least expected. It is as elusive as quicksilver and full of surprises. Neither the toiler nor the gambler can by long study control it; as for the latter, all his pet systems of play break down, unless luck is with him. He spends all his life trying to beat the game, and in the long run the game invariably beats him. And as luck can never be a steady companion, few gamblers die rich. The game itself impoverishes both the proprietor and his clients.

There are some who acquire the habit of gambling; others are born gamblers, and Jack Lamont was one of these.

Had Ebner Ford found him to-night, he would have discovered him winning heavily in one of the best-known gambling-houses in town. Here, also, he was known as "Jack," and any check he signed for was accepted. The old negro at the door, sliding back the small grated panel, knew him instantly on the dark, high stoop, opened the door immediately, bowed low in his brass-buttoned livery, and called him "Mr. L."

Up-stairs, in the shadow of the shades casting their bright light over the long, green roulette table, others knew him as "Jack" Lamont. The faro dealer, with his precise, pale hands, knew him, too, but contented himself with a friendly nod of greeting—omitting his name.

The proprietor was an honest man—a man who never did an unkind act or said an unkind thing to man, woman, or child in his life. This man had rare virtues—he never drank, he never smoked, he never swore; he loved his wife and children; he stood at the elbows of the riffraff of weak humanity in his house, and yet, apart from them all. He possessed the manners of a prince and the heart of a gentleman, for he did kind things nightly. The college youth who lost, and whom he knew could not at all afford it, he would approach in a way that even the youth, heated with drink and gaming, could not take offense at. Little

by little, as the boy lost, he would persuade him to stop. He would explain to him "that he had struck a run of bad luck; that the same thing had happened to him a score of times in his life—suppose you let me take your last hand?"

This over a game of poker in the small room upstairs on the third floor. Then somehow he managed to lose to the boy, lose all he had won from him, gave him a free supper of jellied quail and champagne, and saw that he reached his college train in time, with what he had entered his gambling-house with safe in his pocket.

"You have one of those peculiar streaks of bad luck on," he'd repeat. "Leave the game alone for six months, son; I never knew luck to change in less."

There was something lovable in his character, in his gentle, well-modulated voice, in the gleam of his honest blue eyes, brilliant in a face exceedingly pale, crowned by fair hair silvered at the temples. Tall and slim he was, a straight and graceful man, with a clean-cut profile, a blond mustache, and clothes that were positively immaculate: The white silk ascot tie, with its single pearl, the long gray Prince Albert coat and trousers, the trim patent-leather shoes. And his hands! What wonderful hands he had—pale, ringless hands, yet denoting strength and character. And his spotless white cuffs, and the plain gold links his wife had given him. This tall, pale man, who rang true as gold, he, too, was a born gambler, but he played like a gentleman, and could go to bed at daylight

owing no man a grudge, and with the sincere belief that that which he had won he had won honestly.

Lamont played on—played on as he had luckily the night before, and the night before that. Flushed with his luck, when he finished this morning at five, he had over six thousand dollars of the house's money. The old negro saw him out with a smile, and he handed him a five-dollar bill for his trouble.

He still had sense enough left not to go back to his old haunts. The only wise thing to do he did—went to a respectable hotel, locked his door, and slept until his bank opened for depositors. With his great good luck, his old, sordid haunts had lost their glamour, somehow. His thoughts turned to sweeter things.

He longed to see Sue. He was very much in the same condition of mind as many a man has been before—and who, having bathed, shaved, and dressed, goes out and buys a clean, fresh rosebud for his buttonhole.

CHAPTER XVII

She had been waiting for him at the top of the stairs, had been waiting for him, indeed, half the morning, and now at the sound of his key in the lock of the front door, slipping in between Mercury and Fortune, who kept a constant vigil over tenants, peddlers, or intruders, she rushed again to the banisters.

She was flushed, her small mouth wore a pinched expression, and her whole manner indicated suppressed nervousness.

"Well, Ebner!" she exclaimed with a sigh, and in the voice of a woman who had been waiting in vain for a husband who had stayed out all night.

He raised his lean head as he climbed, the morning's extra sticking out of his overcoat pocket, his eyes studying his wife curiously.

"Well, Em!" he returned, with a cheerful drawl, having a scot-free conscience apropos of the night and being cold sober.

"Ebner!" she exclaimed tragically, as he followed her into the sitting-room.

The flush over her round, apple-like, stupid little face deepened, her small, pinched mouth drooped painfully at the corners; she seemed about to weep, and under the pressure of emotion the skin trembled and showed white under the first crease of her double chin.

She turned by the centre-table and faced him now with the look of a woman about to announce the sudden death of an old friend.

"Ebner!" she repeated painfully, "have you heard the news?"—and with that her small hands covered her eyes.

"Heard? Heard what news? What's ailin' you, Ein?"

"Ebner!" she exclaimed solemnly, "you don't mean to tell me you haven't heard? Why, there it is sticking right out of your pocket, and you mean to tell me you haven't even read it? Oh, Ebner!" she half sobbed, "isn't it terrible?"

"Oh, that!" he grinned, wrenching out the extra, flinging off his overcoat and coat, and chucking both on the sofa. "Bout the slickest piece of free advertisement I've seen in years."

The girl broadened.

"Didn't cost him a cent."

"Oh, Ebner! How my heart aches for his poor wife!"

"Poor? You don't call a woman poor who's got a brownstone front all her own—bottled, three meals a day, and a butler—do yer? Any one'd think half the world had come to an end and the other half was about to fall in business."

"To—to think!" she faltered. "Oh, I'd like to believe, Ebner, there wasn't a word of truth in it—I just would. I'd just like to believe the whole thing was—just—just—like some awful dream. It's so ter-

rible—a man of his refinement and position, married! Oh! why do you stand there looking at me? Why can't you say something, Ebner? Can't you see how terrible it all is—just as he was becoming an old friend—girlie's happiness and all! What can we expect now? Society will close her gates to him—yes, she will—I'm just as sure of it as my name's Emma Ford. We'll have to begin all over again, dear——"

"Close her gates, eh? Not to any alarmin' extent," he declared. "I'd give a cool hundred if I was in his shoes. You bet your sweet life I would! Don't you git to worryin' about society's gates, Em. They wa'n't never so wide open to him as they be now. Ain't he in the public eye? Ain't he? Well, I guess yes—right up in the limelight! Ever stop to think what *that* means? Why, it's credit, it's friends, it's business. It'd mean sales to me—only I ain't got it. I'm one er them fellers that Fortune seldom winks at—and if she did I'd feel like payin' her fifty per cent for her trouble."

She shook her head disconsolately.

"You needn't worry a mite about Lamont now," he continued. "He's on the right railroad track. He's flyin' along the Grand Trunk line to success, and if I ain't mistook, he's passin' small stations without even ringin' his bell."

She was silent as usual under his bombastic speech, knowing it was useless to interrupt him.

"Didn't feature no portrait of the feller that hit him, did they?" he went on with enthusiasm. "Not

much. Ain't that proof enough Lamont's the favorite? Hadn't thought of that, had yer? You ain't seen no picter of the other feller, have yer? No, sir. And you won't, neither; they ain't got *him* framed up in no flags or croquet mallets and a horseshoe for luck thrown into the bargain. That's what I call a ten strike!" he cried, slapping open the extra. "Got him all dolled up, natural as life. Any idea what that front page is worth? Be a little surprised, wouldn't yer, if I was to tell yer five hundred dollars couldn't buy it. Take the picter alone——"

"Ebner!" she intervened bravely, with bated breath. "You don't suppose they'd have dared print it if it wasn't true?"

"Pshaw!" he laughed. "You don't know 'em. Besides, Em, how do you know the whole thing ain't a put-up job? One er them little flimflam hoaxes fer notoriety."

"Ebner!"

"Well, the more I come to think of it the more I dunno but what I'm right. Where's girlie?"

"She's out, dear. It would have broken your heart to have seen her when she read it."

"What'd *she* say?"

"You know how she is, dear. She just went out. She said she was going to luncheon with the Jacksons. She looked positively sick—awful shock to her, Ebner. You know how independent and silent she is when anything affects her."

"Suppose she thinks her good time's all knocked in

the head, eh!" he returned, striding over to the closet for his alpaca coat. "Well, they ain't by a long shot. Why, Em, it ain't nothin' but a joke—more I think of it more I know I'm right. Remember Sol Edmunds, Em—the time he hit Bill Sanders fer courtin' his wife? Remember how it was all a put-up job to give Sheriff Brown the haw, haw?" A vestige of a hopeful smile crept to her flushed face. "Well, they got their names in the papers, didn't they? Whole column, if I remember right, in the Springville *Leader*."

"Oh! Ebner, and you really think, dear, it's—it isn't true; that——"

He flung himself into a chair with an easy laugh. He gave her to understand that she was not supposed to have his long, worldly experience in life, but whatever truth there was in it he'd find out for her and tell her.

"If there is any truth in it," he remarked quite gravely, "I'll go to him as a friend and find out—maybe I can help him. I wa'n't never known to desert a friend in trouble, Em, and you know it."

"I know, dear," she said meekly. "Ebner, I'd go to him. I want you to express to him my sympathy," she added, subsiding wearily in the corner of the sofa. "Our *deepest* sympathy. I can't believe it true of him—say what they may."

"Go to him? Well, now, little woman, that's just what I intended to do. Thinks I, I'll go to him, man to man—a friend in need, Em."

"I know, dear. You'll do what is best."

"Don't I always do what is best?" he smiled, and went over and planted a sound kiss on her flushed cheek.

For a brief moment she held his long hand in hers, pressing it affectionately.

"Yes, dear," she murmured, "you always do. It's girlie I'm thinking about. If you only could have seen her, Ebner."

"Well, now!" he drawled. "I ain't such a thick-head but what I can imagine it did shake her up considerable. You know how girls be, Em. Slightest thing upsets 'em. Last thing they do is to stop and reason. Take a fact always fer granted without divinin' the source."

Ford went to Lamont ostensibly to offer his condolences. His intention was to borrow enough money from him to pay back Miss Ann. That he should have succeeded in borrowing a dollar even from that wayward gentleman seems incredible, and yet one of those strange changes had come over "Handsome Jack." Having played the fool, things took with him a more serious turn of mind. He thought of Sue, and as is often the case with men of his kind, he fell suddenly head over heels in love with her. Not finding him at his house, Ebner Ford found him some days later at his club.

It proved to be a winning day for Ebner Ford. Luck was with him from the first. He explained to Lamont, "man to man," all that had happened. He found Lamont exceedingly nervous after his spree, but

generous, his latter condition of mind, no doubt, due to his heavy winnings and his desire to stand well in favor with Mrs. Ford.

The two men had a heavy luncheon at a near-by chop-house, and at the end of it Lamont would not hear of Sue leaving the apartment. That was out of the question. Over a long cigar he drew breath, and therewith on the spot a check ample enough to make up what Ford owed Miss Ann, and for which he took (not without some polite protest) enough of the United Laundry Association's gilt-edged preferred as security. He could not believe but that Sue would be overwhelmingly grateful. He intended, also, to hold the loan over Ford, if he ever got ugly over his attentions to his stepdaughter. After all, he reasoned, Sue was not Ford's daughter. By his generosity he also wished to defeat Enoch of his desire to get the Fords out of the house. Ebner Ford left him at a little after three, every nerve in him tingling over his good luck.

"There ain't no one can beat me," he said to himself, as he sauntered out of the greasy door of the chop-house and down Broadway, "when it comes to a crisis. I went to him man to man." He smiled with satisfaction. "Well, I pulled off the trick, didn't I? I got what I wanted." Now and then his lean, long hand felt in his inside pocket to see if Lamont's magnanimous check was still safe, and having found that it was, he crossed over to a drug-store and bought a fifty-cent box of stale candy for his wife.

"Business acumen," he muttered, still musing as

the clerk wrapped it up and handed him his package of chocolate creams and his change. The stimulus of sudden and easy money buoyed him up into grand good humor. "Talked to him like a Dutch uncle, didn't I? Not one man in a thousand could have done what I done to-day." And in this he was right.

Farther down the thoroughfare he thought of girlie, of the part she had unconsciously but valuably played in the transaction. For all of half an hour he wandered around a department store looking for a bargain to please Sue, but finding they were all expensive, wandered out again and decided some day to surprise her with a new umbrella. "The best money can buy," he declared, as he boarded a green horse-car, and lighted a fresh cigar Lamont had given him. He stood on the front platform back of the driver, whose big gloved hand had polished continually the knob of the steel brake handle, and whose whip hung limp over the dashboard. They talked of horses in general, and the weather in particular, the toughness of winter especially, and mentioned a few aldermen besides, and the chances on the next election for "ivery dacent hard-workin' man," as the veteran driver expressed it. Meanwhile the car rattled on, all its windows shivered and shook as with the ague, and the smell of its kerosene-lamps was noticeable even on the front platform. Now and then the steaming horses stopped for a second's hard-earned panting rest, while a passenger got on. Now and then Ford nodded back to the conductor to go ahead, but at

Madison Square he swung off with an easy "So long" to the driver, and turned into the Hoffman House with an air of a man who had suddenly been lifted out of his troubles forever.

Success is a dangerous stimulant. Ford feared nothing now. What he saw ahead was a wider market for his stock. It is possible he saw in his optimistic, visionary way, in his abject ignorance of men at large, other Lamonts whom he could cajole to a luncheon they paid for and extract from the victim other checks to help him out of "the little ups and downs," as he called them, of the business world. To Ford to-day the horizon of his affairs had cleared to its zenith, and from that great distance things seemed to be coming his way in droves in so vast a proportion that on his return to Waverly Place he garrulously confessed to his wife all that had happened —even to his interview with Enoch; of Lamont's devotion to them, and of the stanch and generous proof of his friendship. He explained it all to her as merely natural; that in the business world such little incidents were of daily occurrence, and that no really legitimate business was free from them—and, poor soul, she believed him. The news that Lamont was their friend overshadowed anything that had happened.

Could she have kept the joyful news to herself? Impossible! Scarcely had Sue entered the door, when her mother told her everything. Let us pass over this painful scene—of Sue's humiliation and rage, of how the poor child went straight to Enoch, of how she

sobbed out her heart to him, and how he comforted her like a father, glad in his heart that her eyes were open at last to the worthlessness of a man like Lamont, whom he had openly denounced, whose acquaintance with her he had feared from the very first.

Only when Sue had left him did the torrent of Enoch's rage burst forth. All that had previously happened was nothing compared to this—that Ebner Ford should have used Sue, his own stepdaughter, as a means to an end; that he had dared obtain money from Lamont, giving him his worthless stock, giving him as collateral *carte blanche*, as it were, to continue his attentions to Sue as he pleased.

"Good God!" he cried aloud. Then he felt weak and sank into his chair.

For the first time Enoch Crane was beginning to feel how helpless he was to protect a child he loved. After all, what had he accomplished? Denounced a scoundrel in his club, denounced him before his intimate friends, threatened him with what? Then the scandal in the newspapers. Even that had turned out well for the man he despised. "Good God!" he kept murmuring to himself. "What next?"

He sat there white, livid, the muscles of his jaw working, sat there beating a tattoo on the arm of his chair with both hands, a savage gleam in his eyes.

Suddenly he leaped out of his chair and rang for Moses, and presently that servant appeared.

"Yas, Marser Crane," said Moses, poking his gray woolly head in the door.

"Tell Mr. Ford I should like to see him at once," said Enoch, so sharply that Moses opened the whites of his eyes wide. "Tell him I wish to see him immediately," declared Enoch again.

"'Spec' somethin's gone wrong with you, Marser Crane," ventured Moses gently.

"Wrong!" Enoch shouted. "Wrong! Nothing's gone right in this house since Ford entered."

"Dat's suttenly de truth, Marser," agreed Moses. "What's a been a-goin' along ain't suttenly gone right—I seen it frum de fust; ever since he moved in."

"You will go down at once, Moses, and tell him I wish to see him."

"I'se on my way," smiled Moses. "I'll tell him what you done said to me—*'meadiately*—dat you won't take no for an answer. Dat's it—*'meadiately.*"

Moses withdrew. In less than five minutes he returned.

"Well?" asked Enoch, as he opened his door.

"De—de—" (he was about to say gentleman, but checked himself) "de—de—man says—dat he's obleeged to you fer your invitation, but he ain't a-comin'. Dat's his very words, Marser Crane."

Enoch started.

"You're sure that's what he said?" he exclaimed, shooting forward in his chair angrily.

"Dem was his very words," declared Moses. "Hol' on—he done repeated, as I recollect, he ain't a-comin'."

"He said that to you, did he?" said Enoch slowly.

"Dat suttenly was his very syllables," declared the old darky, scratching his woolly head.

"How did he say it?" snapped Enoch.

"Dere ain't no use er makin' any bones 'bout de way dat man talks to me," Moses declared. "Talks like my ole overseer, 'cept he ain't got no whip to cut me with. Fust day I laid eyes on him I sez to Matilda, he ain't no gen'mun—seen it de way he was a hollerin' an' flambastin' round de movers."

"You may go, Moses," said Enoch quietly.

"Yas, sir. Thank yer, Marser Crane," and he was gone.

For a long while Enoch sat there, muttering to himself. Before him on the table lay his check payable to the order of Miss Ann Moulton. In case Ebner Ford failed her he had decided to come to the rescue.

CHAPTER XVIII

Whew! A breath of fresh air!

Joe Grimsby had gone to the woods—to the very heart of the Adirondack wilderness, an old stamping-ground of his—primitive enough in these days, long before the millionaire and his money had invaded and gilded the silent places. Even Atwater did not object to Joe's going—he had worked hard, and needed a change. Their final set of competition drawings for the big building of the Lawyers' Consolidated Trust Company had been handed in for decision; the remainder of their work, two cottages on Long Island, were in the hands of the builders, and the office was taking a well-earned rest. So Joe packed up his things, boarded the Montreal express one evening early in August, got off at daylight on the edge of Lake Champlain at Westport, and found his old friend and guide, Ed Munsey, waiting for him at the small station with a hired team and buckboard.

Ed's quick blue eye caught sight of Joe as he stepped off the sleeper.

"Wall! Wall!" grinned Ed, with a hearty handshake. "Knowed ye'd come. Freme Dubois's boy brought me your letter—let's see, Thursday, wa'n't it? No—come to think of it, it was Friday—'bout noon; I'd been off straightening the trail over to the big

south medders, fer the survey with Bill Williams. Gosh all whimey! We done some travellin' in that thar swamp. Goll, sez I, I knowed ye'd write. Haow goes it, Joe?"

"Fine, Ed. Lord, but I'm glad to get here."

"That yourn?" remarked Ed, noting an English sole-leather trunk by itself on the platform, well scarred and labelled, guaranteeing its travels to Venice, the Tyrol, and beyond.

Joe nodded.

"Reminds me of Hite Pitcomb the time he fell through Hank Jenkins's sawpit. Thar wa'n't a spot on him big's your hand, that Doc Haines didn't stick a plaster on. Let's see, got yer gripsack?" and glancing at the big pigskin bag beside Joe, he slung the trunk on his back, Joe following him to the waiting team.

As Ed tucked the yellow horse-blanket snugly around Joe's knees and picked up the lines, his keen blue eyes looked him quizzically over.

"Lookin' kinder peaked 'round the gills, ain't ye?" he remarked, as he clucked to the horses. "Wall, you'll git over that, soon's we git to camp—gee up!"

The team started for Keene Valley at a brisk trot.

"If I'd a-knowed you was a-comin', I'd er fixed up my old lean-to to the head of the pond—roof was leakin' bad last time I come by thar—a feller'd git kinder moist, as the feller said, if it come on to rain."

As the springy old buckboard rattled on, the rare mountain air, pungent with the perfume of balsam

and pine, sent a glow to Joe's cheeks. He drew a deep, long, delicious breath.

"That's what I want," he cried, with his old breezy enthusiasm, "and plenty of it! Whew! What air, Ed!"

"Help yerself, friend, it's all free," returned his companion.

The two talked on—Joe plying his old friend with a score of questions. "Eph Hammond's girl got married," he learned. "Yes, yes—run off with the drug-store feller down to Alder Brook. Old Man Stimson was dead at last. Jim Oldfield had cut himself bad with an axe, over to Lily Pond—but deer were plenty, and the still water at the head of the Upper Ausable Pond was chock full of trout."

They talked on as they passed through Elizabethtown, and clear of the village, some miles farther on, Joe's eyes feasted upon the first glimpse of the great distant range of mountains that presently loomed up ahead of them—a range he knew every foot of and had loved for years. As they neared Keene Valley, the mountains became majestic; on the left, the black sides of Giant Mountain glistened in the sunlight; beyond, at the extreme end of the long, green, peaceful valley, the peak of Noon Mark peeped above the rifts of morning mist. Now and then a red squirrel skittered across the road. To the left flashed in ripples of light the swirling current of the Ausable River, clear as crystal. The air grew cooler as they dipped down a short hill and skirted an alder swamp, out of

which two woodcock whistled up and disappeared in the deeper forest.

"Gee ap!" cried Ed to the sturdy team. They livened into a brisk trot. It was playful going for the mares after drawing logs all winter down lumber roads of sheer ice, where often a fall, a shifted load, or the snapping of a trace-chain meant death to them.

The big woods had weathered another winter of cruel winds and biting cold, deep in millions of tons of snow. Formidable mountain torrents, like John's Brook, had lain for months frozen and choked under a mass of white domes marking its big boulders; down beneath this coverlet the black water gurgled and swirled. Here and there, during the hard winter, an air-hole disclosed the icy water purling beneath, quarrelling, talking to itself, and where for all these long winter months the trout lay like prisoners in the dark, scarcely moving. Above them the big hemlocks had creaked, groaned, and cried under bitter onslaughts of sleet and wind. Now and then a tree strung tense with the cold gave out a report like a pistol-shot. From the great boulders hung huge yellow icicles, like the stained beards of old men. Tracks were everywhere, a vast labyrinth of telltale goings and comings of the hungry and the wary. The fox cross-tracked the wolverene, circling over the clean snow were noiseless tracks of lean white hares and the straight, mincing tread of partridges. Now and then the solid, nimble track of a panther, prowling while the bears slept soundly in their caves. Here and

there tiny tracks, the timid trot of a mouse, his tail making a faint gash in the snow. Spring had come as a relief at last, freeing all things. To-day the woods basked in the kind old summer. The big brook had become again a roaring torrent. Birds sang again; the hermit-thrush, the last to sing at evening. Nocturnal animals went their several ways under the gentle light of the moon, and every early morning brought that pirate, the kingfisher, like a flash of azure down John's Brook, chattering with devilish glee as he drove the smaller trout in a panic ahead of him, and filled his belly with the one that pleased him, an insolent and arrogant thief, vain of his strong beak and his gay plumage.

To Ed the woods were an open book, and he read them as easily as some do a printed page, though he could scarcely spell, and wrote with difficulty. His shock of hair, seldom combed except for dances, funerals, or weddings, was sandy; his heart was big and his eyes of a clear, penetrating blue. He could see farther than most men in the woods, and could shoot straight under difficulties when many a man would have missed. He was as garrulous as a magpie at times, and silent at others, though his voice, like that of most men living in the wilderness, was low-pitched, a soft, earnest voice. Once a year he dyed his mustache blue-black; that it wore green to one side did not bother him. He had a pet fancy for a stub of a brier pipe, stuffed generally with his "favorite" tobaccos—"Blue Ruin" or "Honey Comb"—and wore gay suspenders

and two thick blue-flannel shirts to keep him warm. He had never ridden on the cars. They were the only thing he was afraid of, never having tried them, though they had tempted him more than once to take him as far as the fair at "Ticonderogi." He had a habit of talking seriously to inanimate things about him. His fire that slowly kindled in a rain, sticks that refused to "lay daown" to kindle, again to the dulled edge of his long-handled, double-bitted axe—a rare occurrence, for he kept it as sharp as a carpenter's chisel. Often he spoke to the weather.

"Goll ding ye!" he'd say, between his teeth, glancing up at the low-lying clouds. "Ain't ye got yer satisfy? Ain't ye got dreened aout yit?"

Joe loved him and he loved Joe. They were close pals. Ed had guided him ever since he was a little shaver of fifteen, taking care of him as if he was his own son—and for all of these precious services he asked nothing, and only accepted their remuneration after long persuasion from Joe and bashful protests—scratching his shock of sandy hair awkwardly and declaring: "By gum! that he wa'n't worth it—that it was a goll-dummed sight too much in dollars, friend. Ain't we hed a good time?" He'd argue: "Wall—ain't that enough?" Ed always "cal'ated" it was. Now and then he managed to send Joe a hind quarter or a saddle of venison; once the skin of a wolverene, a prime pelt killed in December; and twice, when his bear traps yielded over in St. Armand Valley, he sent Joe the skins—ears and all—forfeiting the reward

from the State, and never mentioning it, either. Though he was seldom at home, he had a snug cabin with a dirt floor down by the river, four hound dogs, a wife, a melodeon that nobody could play, two strapping daughters, afraid of no man alive, and a suspension lamp.

They were only details in his life. He preferred the deep woods, often travelling in the wilderness for weeks alone, sometimes off with the State Survey, who always got him when they could, since he possessed a bump of location, a sense of direction that was phenomenal; often he was fishing or still-hunting for deer, or following his line of sable traps as far up as Panther Gorge and the summit of Mount Marcy. He could spend a week in the woods with no more than a dozen matches; when one got damp he rubbed it dry in his hair.

The two spent the night in the valley at the old white hotel with the green blinds. Early the next morning they provisioned up at the small store and post-office opposite, smelling of dried herrings, calico, cheese, baby's shoes, and lumbermen's new brogans.

Half a dozen habitués who had known Joe for years slid off the counter close to the cheese screen to grip him by the hand in welcome.

"Wall! Wall!" they exclaimed, and that was about all, except they added that, "Ed had been expectin' ye and that your letter come all right."

By noon they were en route to camp on the Upper Ausable Pond, by way of the muddiest lumber road

in the world, mud hub-deep, black mud, covering patches of sunken corduroy, treacherous roots and hidden rocks that snapped their full share of axles during a season, spilled off provisions, burst flour-sacks, and brought forth a string of profanity along its entire contrary length. Ed and Joe trudged on back of the buckboard. To ride was impossible. Now and then the strong team, guided to-day by Bill Dubois's boy, also on foot, strained, plunged on, and stopped for a panting rest. Moreover, the old road was steep, only reaching its height of land as it came into a glimmering view through the trees of the Lower Ausable Pond, that lay below, still and mirrored between the flanks of the great mountains. To the right rose the Gothics, and beyond, sheer up above their granite flanks, the high peak of Mount Marcy.

Once in sight of the Lower Ausable, the air became even rarer. A gentle breeze that shirred the surface of the long pond, set the silvery leaves of a clump of poplar-trees shivering and the water slopping along the rocky shore. Here, too, they said good-by to Bill Dubois's boy. By the time they had rowed through the Lower Ausable, made the carry of a mile and a half between the twin ponds, and reached Ed's lean-to at the head of the upper pond, it was nearly dark. Ed's frail green boat, loaded down within three inches of the water-line, slipped up to a small patch of sand that served as a landing before the cleared spot in front of his primitive camp. Ed sprang out and steadied the boat for Joe. The next instant

he had picked up the heaviest of the two pack-baskets, slid his strong arms through its broad leather straps, and with a grunt slowly staggered with it to his feet, over a hundred pounds dead weight.

"Hold on!" cried Joe. "Let me help!" he insisted, in vain, as Ed started up the bank. "Pretty heavy, isn't it? Looks as if it weighed a ton to me."

Under the dead weight Ed turned and grinned.

"Wall," he drawled, "it ain't no earring."

He set down the pack-basket with a thump before the lean-to and glanced about him. Finally, he decided on a group of dry balsams to the left, a few strokes of his keen axe levelled three. These he cut into lengths, and hauled before the camp. Then he went in search of a rotten stump, broke out from its centre a handful of "punk," gathered a few shreds of birch bark, arranged his fire, struck one sulphur match on the seat of his thick, gray-woollen, homespun trousers, and soon had a cheery blaze crackling and snapping a welcome.

Nothing is worse than a fireless camp. The fire is everything; it is almost meat and drink.

As it grew darker it made the spot a home. An owl hooted across the silent pond. Beyond the limit of the firelight lay the hushed wilderness, stretching afar, and it is safe to say that the only other campfire to-night for miles was Si Skinner's, whom Ed "cal'ated was floatin' for deer clear over to the Boreas Ponds."

Out came Ed's magic "fry-pan." With the fra-

grance of the coffee and the scent of sizzling bacon and beans Joe became ravenous. He could hardly wait until Ed cried, "Supper!" and added, with a shout that echoed across the pond: "Daylight on zee swamp, and beans on zee tab', git up, you peasonuers!" being an old lumberjack's shout in calling the Canuck French element in camp to breakfast.

"We'd er done well to hev took thet little whiffet dorg of Bill Saunders along," declared Ed, as they sat smoking in the warm glow of the fire after supper. "Cunningest little cuss you ever seen to run a deer. Me and Bill killed four ahead of him last fall. He don't make no noise—Bill learned him that; got a voice on him ez weak's a kitten's. Then, thinks I, we won't hev no trouble gitten a deer jackin' if it keeps up ez warm ez this. Flies hev begun to trouble 'em considerable nights. They'll be sloshin' down into the still water soon. Bill come through here, it wa'n't more'n a week ago, and seen four—three bucks and a doe—jest this side of the Gull rock, not forty rod from whar you shot at the otter two year ago. 'Bout ez neat a shot as I ever see."

The two lay smoking on their backs on a fresh and springy bed of balsam boughs, a fragrant mattress skilfully thatched by Ed, their boots off before the warm blaze, while they talked on of many things—among them two dances over in New Russia Valley that Ed was sorry Joe had not been up to go to.

The dance Ed recounted "over to Jedwins' folks Christmas night" was a great success. More than a

dozen sleighs had brought the crowd. The Williams boys fiddled; the coonskin coats were piled as high as the ceiling. They had moved out the stove in the square kitchen of the log cabin, and had danced until broad daylight.

As Ed continued his narrative, Joe could almost hear the tramping, swishing feet, for he had gone to many of these dances; hear the laughter and the rough jokes; could see a score of rosy-cheeked, healthy girls sitting in the room off the kitchen, and being beckoned to by their partners to dance; and the jigs they played, swift jigs to stir the blood—"The Pride of Michigan" and the "Cat in the Cabbage" scraped out with a will, with a speed and a rhythm that is characteristic of these backwoods fiddlers; and above the music the shouts: "Alley mand left! Alley mand right! Dos a dos! First lady in the centre, and all hands around and swing your own!"

They pounded the floor; often they broke it in places, and in every hip pocket was a flask.

"Let's have a song, Ed," pleaded Joe, kicking up the fire into a shower of sparks, and returning to the fragrant bed of balsams, and though Ed tried to beg off, Joe insisted.

Finally Ed cleared his throat and began in a singsong drone:

"Willy Jones—hez gone an'—'listed.
Willy to—the war hez gone.
He left his little wife, all to hum,
All to hum—to grief and mourn."

He wiped the green side of his dyed mustache with the back of his hand, and began the second verse drowsily, quavering on the high notes:

"She dressed herself—in man's attire,
And went by the name—of Richard Carr,
With her lily-white fingers—all besmirched,
All besmirched—with pitch and tar."

Here he paused.

"Go on," coaxed Joe. "How about the part on the parade-ground. Remember?"

"Hold on—let's see. Kinder slipped out of my mind—been so long since I tried to sing it."

But Joe was again insistent, and after a little thinking Ed resumed:

"One day when she—was exercisin'—
Exercisin'—on the green,
A silver butting—flew off her waistcoat,
And her lily-white throat was seen."

Again the singer stopped.

"Now, hold on, there's a fourth verse," declared Joe eagerly.

"Let's see—so there is," confessed Ed sleepily, and after a long pull at his pipe, resumed slowly:

"When the captin—see this action,
See the deed—that she had done,
He made her gineral—of the army,
Of the army—ninety-one——"

"Thar! thet's all I kin remember," he declared.

It was one of those old lumberjack songs that had come from no one knew where. As far as Joe knew, this favorite backwoods ballad of his had never been written, like scores of others gleaned out of the lumber camps.

But it was growing late, and both were drowsy after their long tramp. The fire had sunk to embers. They stacked it up for the night with the remaining niggered ends of the dry balsams, and before another five minutes had elapsed the two were rolled up and snoring in their blankets. Then all was still, save that at intervals the owl hooted hoarsely from across the pond, or a muskrat plunged down by the landing, close to their boat. When they awoke, the warm sun was streaming in upon them, and the pond, still as a plate of glass, lay under a blanket of rosy mist. That night Joe had dreamed of Sue.

To Joe the still water at the head of the pond had a strange fascination, a silent stream, black as onyx, its current bordered by the deep forest of spruce and pine, with now and then a giant hemlock, centuries old, lifting its shaggy top above them. So perfectly were the trees mirrored in the stream that it was often difficult to tell where the water-line began.

The stream this year was swarming with trout; seldom had its gravelled spawning beds yielded better fishing. Here, too, the deer came to drink. At night the winding stream became ghostly and as silent as

death, save now and then the slosh of a leaping trout or the plunge of a muskrat.

There was something of the unfathomable and the unknown in this weird, lonely river, buried as it was miles back of civilization.

To-night the slim, green boat moved up it, and turned to the right and left in its varied bends, hemmed in by the black trees. The boat, like the two men within it, did not make a sound, and though Ed's paddle kept constantly in motion under water, he avoided lifting it clear of the current. In the absolute stillness even its drip would have been heard. In the bow where Joe sat in the chill air, with a Winchester across his knees, glowed with a peculiar ghostly light an old-fashioned jack-lantern; back of its stub of a candle Ed had nailed a semicircle of hemlock bark, whose inner slippery peel, white as ivory, served as a reflector, obliterating from view the boat and its occupants. It was an ideal night to float for deer—the moon not yet up.

It was past midnight when they stealthily turned to the right up a stretch of water, swinging along under some alders that shaded in daylight a patch of shallow water with a clean sand bottom. Suddenly Ed's paddle gently backed water. Joe did not know his paddle had reversed, but he felt an almost imperceptible shake to the green boat, cautiously lifted his rifle, and, peering ahead of him, saw a grayish object close up to the alders. Half a stroke of Ed's paddle, and he saw more plainly an animal that resembled a sort

of phantom horse but was in reality a small spike-horned buck. He had been drinking, and now raised his trim head and stood gazing into the lantern's ghostly light. Like a flash he started to spring to the bank, but Joe was too quick for him; down he went with a shot that broke his neck.

"By goll, Joe, you done well," came Ed's quiet remark, as together they lifted the deer in the boat and started for camp. They had barely reached the Gull rock when the moon rose, flooding the pond with its soft radiance, changing the chill low-lying mist to a silvery veil.

When they reached camp they turned in and slept late, and it was nearly noon before Ed had the fat spike-horned buck "dressed out" and hung.

They kept a saddle and a fore quarter with them, and the hind quarters and the other fore quarter they took down to the lower pond, where they hung it for safe-keeping close to the shore in a small cavern below some big boulders known as the Ice Cave. Here nature had provided for the hunter an excellent refrigerator, inasmuch as it held several tons of ice all the year round, possibly due to its being entirely screened from the sun's rays, and the fact that a cold draft of air whirled through it constantly.

These were the good old days when rich clubs and improvement companies had not penetrated the wilderness; macadamed roads, luxurious camps, electric-lighted hotels, French chefs, automobiles, and golf courses did not exist. The big woods still held their

mysteries and their hardships; they held natives, too —big-hearted men like Ed Munsey, simple as children and full of dry humor. It was a vast paradise of things beautiful and real, and of constant adventure.

Already Joe looked like a different man; you would have scarcely recognized him as the smiling but rather peaked Joe, who had stepped off the stuffy sleeper. No fellow could have been more constantly in a better humor; the girth of his already broad shoulders seemed to have increased—at least Ed "'lowed" they had—and there was a healthy, solid ruddiness about him that made Ed's heart glad. Moreover, though it was August, they had the upper pond, so far, to themselves. The four or five other modest open lean-to camps along its shore were still fireless and deserted, and though a small party of hunters in two boats a few days later passed through the ponds en route to the Boreas country, they did not stop.

The weather held fine. Sharp, cold nights, splendid crisp, sunny mornings, the pond boiling in mist, lazy noons and peaceful twilights, when Joe cast for trout up the silent, still water. The little camp was dry and in perfect order. Wasps crawled into the jam-pot whenever they could get a chance, or droned over the warm ashes of their fire, their only other visitors being a few friendly chipmunks and a family of cedar-birds.

Be it said in passing, that if we have been at pains to describe in detail the exact environment in which

Mr. Joseph Grimsby found himself these days, carefree as a gypsy and as brown and healthy as a lumberjack, it is because this very spot marked, ten days later, the turning-point in his life. To receive a telegram in camp generally means bad news. We instantly think of an imperative order to return at once to civilization, or worse, the serious illness of those nearest to us—even death. The telegram addressed to Joe was brought into Keene Valley by the mail stage at noon, and handed to the postmaster in the small country store, who, having got hold of Bill Dubois's boy, sent him off with it to the upper pond.

It must be said to his credit that Bill Dubois's boy, whose name was Henry, and who was called Hi for short, made the trip up to camp at his best speed. That he only arrived after twilight was no fault of his. There was his father's flat-bottomed scow hid in the bushes at the end of the lower pond, and it leaked badly; besides the pond, unlike its mate above, had roughened up under a sudden breeze, and he had to pull with all his long-legged, long-armed, red-eared strength to reach the carry, at the other end of which the boat he had counted on he found had been taken by the party going to the Boreas country. There was a vague and overgrown trail, however, skirting the shore, that he knew Joe and Ed were camped on, and having hallooed for some minutes in vain in the hope of their hearing him, he took to the trail, no easy going in the fast deepening dusk, stumbling over fallen logs. Finally he began to reach the head of the pond, and

presently came out upon the small clearing before the lean-to.

Not a human being was in sight, and though he hallooed and shouted again, no one answered him, save a loon about thirty rods from shore, whose shrill, diabolical laugh seemed to mock him. He searched around, found the lantern, lighted it, brightened up the smouldering fire, made himself some tea, discovered a square of raw pork "freshening" in the dew on a stump, cut off a slice with his jack-knife, slipped it between two hardtack biscuits and, having eaten it, washed it down with the rest of the tea. Then he flung himself on the bed of balsam and was soon snoring, the telegram stuck conspicuously in an axe-cut on the lean-to's ridge-pole.

By this time Joe and Ed, who had fished far up the still water, were making their way back to camp. As their boat came out into the pond and clear of the Gull rock, Ed was the first to catch sight of their brightened fire.

"Wall, I swan!" he exclaimed. "I presume likely we got a visitor, Joe."

"Looks like it, Ed."

"Some pitiful cuss hez got lost, mebbe," reasoned Ed, and sunk his oars deep, lifting the frail craft with every stroke as they made for the flickering fire.

"Halloo thar!" shouted Ed, but neither the loon's laugh nor Ed's halloo awakened Hi Dubois. He lay on his back, one freckled hand thrown across his open mouth. Ed shook him into consciousness as Joe

caught sight of the telegram. He tore it open anxiously. He could scarcely believe the news. His breath came quick, and his eyes gleamed as he read it again under the lantern.

Sue and the Jacksons arrive Wednesday eighteenth. Have camp and guides ready Upper Ausable.

ENOCH CRANE.

That night Joe scarcely slept a wink. He was too happy to sleep. Sleep! And you ask a young man to sleep under the stimulant of as much sheer, unexpected happiness as that telegram contained? He got up a dozen times and paced around the fire. Joy had made him too nervous to lie down. Finally he abandoned the fire and, slipping on his moccasins, went down to the edge of the pond, where he sat on a log, his eyes wide open, dreaming. The first vestige of dawn, that peculiar gray light which is neither night nor day, and which first favors the open places, crept over the pond, awakening the loon, who laughed at him and instantly dived. Joe still sat there—trying to realize it all—to reason out how it had happened. He had thought the old pond enough of a paradise until now. It was nothing compared with what it would be.

Sue was coming!

He had never met the Jacksons, though Sue had casually mentioned them. Were they old or young? How many Jacksons were there? The whole thing

seemed incredible. Why had Enoch Crane sent the telegram? Only Atwater knew where he was.

These thoughts and conjectures passed in a flood through his mind. A kingfisher, making his earliest morning round of the shore, chattered by him. He heard Ed yawn, and knew he was awake. Ed was talking now to the Dubois boy. Presently he heard the sound of his axe, lopping down some fresh firewood. It brought him to his feet and out of his revery, waking him up to his responsibility and the practical side of the situation. Joe knew there was no camp among the four or five lean-tos on the pond comfortable enough for women. They were like Ed's, primitive shelters, roofed with bark and sadly out of repair. A good weather-tight, open lean-to must be built with a separate one as dressing-room for the ladies. All this he discussed eagerly with Ed after breakfast. They rowed Hi Dubois down to the carry, and Joe having rewarded that faithful messenger, they returned to camp.

Here Joe's pent-up enthusiasm broke loose.

"By the gods!" he cried. "We'll build a dandy, Ed!" in which he was seconded by the trapper, whose blue eyes already twinkled over the scheme. A week still remained before the Jacksons' arrival, and they went to work with a will, clearing a space beside the old lean-to, Ed chopping and Joe hauling.

By the next night the three log sides of the new camp were notched and in place, and before another forty-eight hours the roof was on. The next morning,

a few rods behind it, they started a smaller one. This was to serve as a dressing-tent for the ladies, for in those days, friends, chaperons, boys and girls, sweethearts, cousins, guides, and aunts, all shared the same roof and the same open fire at their feet. Ah! the good old days—they're gone now.

The millionaire attended to that.

Before noon of the seventeenth the new camp was ready, and "ez neat as a piny," as Ed expressed it, its double roof of bark water-tight, its open front facing the pond, and its bed of balsams deep and long enough to comfortably sleep ten if need be.

That afternoon, leaving Ed in camp, Joe started alone down to the valley to meet them on the morrow. Despite all his joyful expectancy, he had his keen moments of doubt and fear. What were the Jacksons like? he wondered. Somehow he could not help fearing they would bring with Sue some impossible girl —some selfish, fastidious niece, perhaps. He was ready for anything, however, as long as they brought Sue.

He spent that night at the old hotel, and most of the next morning between the middle of the road and the porch of the store. The faintest sound of wheels brought him out to the highway.

Suddenly he caught sight of a distant buckboard. It drew nearer. There was no mistaking it. Joe's heart beat like a trip-hammer. There they were! Bill Dubois's boy was driving; next to him sat a short

gray-haired, middle-aged man in a slouch-hat, shading a genial, round countenance; behind them a lady wearing a green veil, and beside her—Sue.

Joe was waving frantically. Jackson waved both arms wildly in the air, Sue waved her pocket-handkerchief, and Mrs. Jackson, untying her green veil, waved that.

They had arrived, and there was no niece—only their baggage, roped on behind.

"Well, here we are!" exclaimed Mr. Richard Jackson, as he jumped from the front seat and gripped Joe's hand. There was a smile playing all over his round, genial face, and a twinkle in his eyes. "We got here, you see, safe and sound. Whew! What air!"

Joe felt they were friends already.

"Mr. Grimsby," Sue ventured, turning to Alice Jackson, by way of presenting him.

"I'm going to call you Joe," she said frankly, stretching out her gloved hand to him across Sue's knees.

The moment he had looked into her brown eyes and heard her speak, he knew she was "a dear." It was evident she was some ten years younger than her husband, a slim, energetic little woman, with a smile that was merry and sincere. He noticed, too, that her dark hair was just turning gray. She was charming—that charm that comes from frankness, intelligence, and refinement.

"I'm going to call you Joe, too," declared her husband, gripping Joe heartily by both shoulders, "and don't you forget that my name's Dick."

No one would have taken this jolly man of forty-five for the auditor of one of the largest systems of railroads in the country, but he was. He, too, needed a well-earned rest.

Ah, yes—there was another one standing now by the empty buckboard who called him "Joe"—but her small hand lingered in his the longest.

That very night, with big Jim Turner as extra guide, they reached the Upper Ausable and camp.

It did not take Ed, Joe, or Jim Turner long to find out that the Jacksons were used to the woods. They had a camp of their own in northern Canada, where they had fished and hunted for years, but it was too far away for this trip. As for Sue, she was gloriously happy. She went into ecstasies over everything—the beauty of the ponds, the water, the silence, the snug camp, the table of rough boards, and the crackling fire.

Never had she seemed so dear to Joe, more attractive than ever, in her sensible short skirt of greenish-brown homespun, her trim camping boots, and a very becoming little felt hat, which Joe lost no time in making gay with three scarlet ibis and a silver doctor from his fly-book.

That night at supper came another surprise; under Joe's tin plate lay a letter, which Sue had slipped there under strict orders from Enoch.

"He will understand, my dear, when he reads it," he had said to her, and, furthermore, that she should hide it under his plate their first night in camp. Even the Jacksons did not know of its existence.

"Hello!" cried Joe, as he seated himself and discovered it. "Mail, eh! Why, there isn't any stamp on it. Who of you three dear people brought this?"

The Jacksons' innocence was evident at a glance.

Joe looked at Sue and smiled.

"You?" he asked. "Come, confess." But her eyes already confessed it.

"It's from Mr. Crane. Hadn't you better read it? He said it was important."

He tore open the envelope and scanned the following. Then for an instant his eyes opened wide and he half rose. It ran as follows:

MY DEAR FELLOW:

I have the honor to inform you that, at our last meeting of the Lawyers' Consolidated Trust Company, the firm of Atwater and Grimsby have been awarded the plans for our new building. My hearty congratulations. As ever,

Your old friend,
ENOCH CRANE.

Two weeks passed—two whole weeks of memorable days. No jollier party had ever come to the pond.

Then came their last evening, when that mysterious magnetic spell of the dark old still water drew their green boat far up its silent stretches, Joe at the paddle and Sue lying wrapped in a camp blanket in the bow. There were long moments when neither spoke to-night—their last on the old stream together. Sue lay motionless, gazing up at the great star-strewn

heavens above her, framed by the dark spruces. Despite their millions of stars, it was so dark under the trees that Joe in the stern could scarcely make out her silhouette. Now and then her ears caught the drip-drip of his paddle. The silence was intense. It seemed to Sue almost a sacrilege to break it by words.

What could she say!

To-morrow meant good-by to their paradise.

Two weeks ago they were rich in days—now they counted the hours.

She lay there trying to be brave, to reason, to be grateful for all those days of comradeship. It had been her first experience in the woods. She felt as if she dreaded ever seeing the city again, the dingy old house, the hot, stifling streets, and the lessons. The green boat moved noiselessly around another bend. Sue closed her eyes.

Joe felt strangely silent, too. Something gripped at his heart, but he kept on bravely at his paddle. Finally, with a feeling of desperation, he drove the boat straight into the overhanging alders.

"Sue!"

She heard him call softly to her and opened her eyes.

"Yes, Joe."

"Hold fast to that branch, please—quick! That's it—hold tight——"

She did as he bid her, freeing herself quickly from the blanket, gripping the branch with both hands, for the current ran strong there.

Joe drove his paddle into the swift shallow water,

burying it deep in the sandy bottom. He lashed his paddle with his belt-strap to an oar-pin, stepped forward, leaned over Sue, made the bow chain fast to a half-sunken snag, and crept down beside her.

"Sue, are you cold?"

"No," she murmured; "that is, not—very."

He wrapped her again snugly in the blanket and sought her small hand beneath it.

It was like ice.

"Sue, you are frozen."

"I'm all right," she declared faintly.

"Sue!"

He felt her hand tighten in his own. He bent over her, his heart beating.

"Sue—it's our last night."

Her lips quivered. The small hand in his own trembled, but she did not speak.

"Sue, do you realize it all—that to-night you and I must say good-by to this dear old stream; that it may be years before we shall ever see it again—live it again—perhaps never?"

"I know," she breathed, scarce audibly.

"You can never know what it meant to me to get that telegram. To know that you were coming. That we should be together—day in and day out. Sue, I've tried to be a good playmate—just as you wished—just as I promised I would."

"Oh, Joe! It's been so wonderful; just like some wonderful dream—every day of it, every hour of it," she exclaimed softly.

Impulsively he slipped his strong arm beneath her fair little head, and drew it gently to his shoulder.

"Oh, Joe—don't—don't make it any harder!" she pleaded. "I—I can't bear it."

She made an effort to strain away from him, her face, though close to his own, only barely visible in the dark.

"Sue!" he cried tensely—with a sudden tightening of his arm, "can't you see how hard it is for me? That I love you—that I love you with my whole heart and soul?"

He felt her tremble.

"Can't you believe me? Can't you feel what I say is true?"

She felt weak—only half conscious now of his voice.

He was past all reasoning.

"I love you," he whispered against her smooth young cheek, wet now with the tears she could no longer keep back.

"Joe, you—you must not—oh, Joe, please——"

"I love you," he repeated, his lips wet with her tears. "I didn't think it square to say so before; but now things are so different—with the big building ours. Can't you see——"

She drew a quick, tense breath and a stifled sob escaped her quivering mouth—that warm, yielding little mouth his lips sought now and gained.

She had no longer the strength to resist.

"Sue," he pleaded, against her lips; "Sue—will—will you be my wife?"

"Tell me you love me," he insisted.

For an instant he released her.

"Will you?" he pleaded.

"Yes," she whispered in his ear.

"Yes," she repeated tensely, and her young arm went strong about his neck.

"Yes, I will be your wife," she breathed.

"Tell me you love me," he insisted.

"Ah, Joe—how can you ask!" came her quick reply between two kisses, seeking his lips of her own free will.

Frail as she was, he felt her strength, felt her young heart beating against his own, and for a long while he held her close in his arms.

Beneath the green boat the dark stream flowed on, purling, eddying, chuckling to itself. It is safe to say that never had so strange a thing happened in that hushed and lonely spot, to which the strong spruces can to this day bear witness, as well as an old owl (be he still alive), who saw it all from the hemlock with his big yellow eyes.

CHAPTER XIX

Before another month had elapsed, society learned of the engagement.

Society was "appalled"!

That the distinguished young architect, Mr. Joseph Grimsby, was about to throw himself away for life to marry a little nobody—a girl who sang for a living—was beyond their exclusive comprehension. Moreover, that there were several worthy mammas with débutante daughters who had actually set for him one of those splendid matches that nine times out of ten turn out badly, cannot be denied. In a twinkling this popular young man became the sole topic of gossip, having fallen so low in their estimation that they put him down as an erratic Bohemian—clever, no doubt, but a disgrace to the name of Grimsby.

They prattled on at teas and dinners apropos of his "ridiculous engagement," of the shock to his family, though the only near relative left to the boy was his uncle, both his father and mother having died when he was little. They discussed his good looks, which he still possessed; his brilliant career, which in fact had only just begun, though it bid fair to lead him to the foremost rank as an architect. They remembered his breezy good nature, which he still gave out as easily as he laughed or breathed to every

one he came in contact with—all these society discussed, argued, and gossiped over at their leisure—all save the fact that they loved each other.

"I should not have been at all surprised, my dear," declared Mrs. Gulliver Jones, whose diamonds trembled in unison with her years, and who rouged at sixty, "had he chosen a dancer—some low person of the stage," she confided, wrinkling her beak. "Why, my dear, his family comes from the bluest of the blue. Of course you know his mother was a Pierrefont, a noted beauty, my dear, in my day. We were girls at school together. I can see her now at her first Charity Ball. Why, I'll tell you who her sister married—Johnny Selwyn—why, my dear, Mrs. Selwyn Rivers's own first cousin. The Selwyns were great swells in my day. As I told Gulliver yesterday, what are our young men coming to! Who is this young person, anyway? This Miss What's-her-name? Preston, you say? They tell me she goes about giving lessons; that she can be actually hired for performances—paid in the hand—paid in the hand, my dear, like a mountebank, or a minstrel. You say she sang at Mrs. Van Cortlandt's," she cackled on. "I am not surprised. Do tell me what has become of that wretched woman! That extravagant creature! That she drove her poor husband to suicide does not at all amaze me. Vanity, my dear. What a fool Joe Grimsby has made of himself. Have I seen her? Certainly not. Neither has any one met the mother as far as I am able to discover. They tell me that both mother and daughter

live in the same house as the young man—engaged and under the same roof—shocking state of affairs—and that if I am to believe my ears, her stepfather, who lives with them, takes in washing—or is in the laundry business?—or something of the sort as equally impossible. Suppose he does marry her—who will receive them? Certainly not *I*. Not a door will be open to them, mark my word. For heaven's sake, my dear Elizabeth, if you have the slightest influence over him, do go and tell him he is making a fool of himself. I almost feel it is my duty to go myself, if it were not that I dreaded meeting those wretched people."

Much of this tittle-tattle reached Emma Ford's ears, who received it with resignation. She nevertheless suffered keenly from a sort of disappointment of what might have been, and which she was thoroughly incapable of defining. Having given her consent, she had begun to prepare herself for the inevitable, and become as satisfactory a mother-in-law as circumstances permitted. So much had happened in the past few months to shatter her hopes and ambitions. Her dream had been to see Sue placed upon the pinnacle of her social aspirations, surrounded by luxury, living in a continual reception, the centre of admiration, the daily recipient of armfuls of American beauty roses, bonbons, and applause. Never once had she thought seriously of her some day marrying—all that was in the vague, comforting future, if that were really to happen—but it had. Sue with her usual frankness had gone straight to her mother on her

return from the woods, and had told her everything. Mrs. Ford was at first overwhelmed. Then she burst into tears. Then she sent for Joe. The usual scene had ensued, during which his gentleness and his courtesy had touched her. There is no gainsaying that it had its effect. Even she could not deny his sincerity or his love for Sue. She had embraced him in the end, and under the stress of emotion and her fast-returning tears (for she had a tender heart, poor soul) had patted him affectionately on the shoulder, declaring that she was sure he would make Sue a good husband. Ebner Ford standing by, ready with his best deportment and his long hand for the fifth time during the interview to congratulate him.

What worried the promoter most was what the new building for the Lawyers' Consolidated Trust Company would cost. He already began to compute the Atwater-Grimsby percentage as being more or less of a personal asset to himself. All things reflected upon, he considered "girlie's latest move" in a promising light. The only thing he regretted was that the award had not been for a colossal hotel as big as the Fifth Avenue. In that case he felt that his prerogative as a father-in-law would entitle him to supplying its subterraneous portion with a steam-mangle plant, and give him a ten-year contract for the entire wash of the establishment, from guests to barber-shop.

There was one gentleman, however, who lived on the top floor, whose heart beat with entire approval. If any one had been instrumental in bringing about

this happy state of affairs it was he. Had he not at the first inkling from Sue that her friends, the Jacksons, were thinking seriously of going to the woods and had begged her to be their guest in camp, somewhere—their own in Canada being too far for a short vacation—had not Enoch immediately invited the three to dine at Delmonico's?—an excellent and exceedingly diplomatic little dinner, during which he convinced the Jacksons that the most sensible thing they could do was to join Mr. Grimsby—eulogizing on that young man's charm, character, and knowledge of the woods in such glowing terms that the trip was decided upon then and there.

Even before they had risen from the table he had sent Joe the telegram by a trusted waiter, who had served him for years. Three days later, at a meeting of the board of directors of the Lawyers' Consolidated Trust Company, his deciding vote had given Joe and Atwater the building.

"You seem happy, Crane," remarked his old friend Gresham at the club that night. "Look as if Wall Street had handed you a million."

Enoch gripped his hands behind him and looked sharply up at his questioner.

"Millions do not make happiness, Gresham," he returned curtly. "Why the devil are you fellows always thinking about money?"

One thing he could rub his hands over with satisfaction. He had nothing more to fear from Lamont's attentions to Sue. He had checkmated that

gentleman for all time and had wiped him off the board.

Needless to say, at the news of Sue's engagement, Jack Lamont avoided Waverly Place now as he would have the pest. Bitter as he felt toward the stepfather since he had been fool enough to give him what would clear him out of his difficulties, he suffered even a deeper humiliation that his generosity had brought him nothing in the way of forcing his way into Sue's favor. He had called upon her twice—once to find from the maid she was out, and again to discover from the same servant that she had left the day before with the Jacksons for camp. He had played and lost—a new experience for Handsome Jack, when it involved money and the pursuit of a girl that pleased him. More than once he decided to put the screws on Ebner Ford and bring him to account. After all, he had given him his check of his own free will, accepting his gilt-edged preferred as collateral. Man of the world as he was, he ended by shrugging his shoulders and considering the affair in the light of a bad investment. Moreover, his mind was occupied with a far graver affair these days, that threatened as it developed to drive him out of New York. He even went to Rose Van Cortlandt for advice, begging her to ransack her feminine ingenuity and rid him of a woman who was making his life daily unbearable. Both he and Rose were much too old and worldly pals not to have talked the affair over sensibly together—at least she was not fool enough to believe

that she alone was the only one who could lay claim to him.

Rose had changed. She was no longer the gracious spoiled Rose Van Cortlandt of old. Her widowhood and the Bohemian life she had led since Sam Van Cortlandt's suicide had left its imprint. She was still a seductive, remarkably handsome woman, but she had grown harder. This showed in certain lines about her still glorious eyes, especially when she smiled; her lips were thinner, the angle of her jaw squarer, the subtle curves of her once lovely throat and neck less interesting. Strange to say, she still preserved her figure, her white skin, and her splendid arms. She looked upon life now with more of the view-point of a man of the world than of a woman. Much of her femininity had gone. She had grown calmer, more calculating; men no longer disillusioned her, though she still trusted them more than she did women. Of the latter, she could still count a few among her acquaintances who came to her studio apartment in Washington Square. All of them she had met since her husband's death; but mostly her friends were men. Like the women, they, too, had come into her life after the tragedy. She still regarded Jack Lamont, however, as her oldest friend, the one who understood her best, and no one understood Jack Lamont better than Rose. Both had reached that stage in their friendship when they knew each other perfectly. Illusion no longer existed between them. Between two such people there are no secrets—even jealousy is ab-

surd. It was now nearly the middle of September. He had called upon her to-day a little before five. She saw at a glance that he was worried and depressed and extremely nervous.

She flung herself down on the big divan in the corner of the studio, stretched forth a bare arm from the flowing pink sleeve of a tea-gown, picked up a fresh cigarette from a green jarful on a small smoking-table close to the mass of cushions, and after a few whiffs, half closed her dark eyes, and with an amused smile, began to question him.

"Where did you meet her, Jack?" she asked, still smiling. "Do sit down. You make me nervous, walking about like a caged lion. Come! Where did you meet her?"

He drew up a low stool beside her, lighted a fresh cigarette himself, blew the smoke through his nostrils, and said with a shrug:

"At the Grand Central Station—oh, months ago—in January—waiting for an incoming train—the Buffalo express, I remember. Snowed up and two hours late."

"Ah, I see! So you decided she was too good-looking to be left alone, was that it?"

"That was about it—she was."

"Dangerous game, Jack," she returned quite seriously. "You ought to be old enough not to do that sort of thing—picking up an acquaintance with a woman you knew nothing about."

"I've always been able to take care of myself," he

started to explain, half in protest, but she raised her bare arm to interrupt him.

"Demure, of course—sincere, frank, too good-looking for you to resist," she continued evenly. "Told you a little of her history without telling you anything. Worried over her aunt possibly, who she felt might be aboard the express. What sort of woman—I mean as far as station in life—young? "

"Twenty-eight, I should say—though she said twenty-five——"

"Well dressed?"

"Er—yes—neatly."

"Blond?"

"No, dark—darker, even, than you."

"Startled—when you spoke to her?"

"A little embarrassed, of course—but we got talking."

"You mean *you* got talking. Any one she knew aboard the express when it arrived?"

"Not a soul."

"Anxious—tearful?"

"Both."

"Invite her to dinner?"

Jack nodded.

"So that was the beginning, eh? Champagne?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"McGowan's Pass Tavern."

"I see. When did she begin to hint at the breach-of-promise idea?"

"Oh! about two months ago. She was getting pretty savage about that time, used to follow me, wrote me twice a day, even hung around the club."

"Scenes, hysterics, threats of suicide—and all that sort of thing?"

Jack nodded again with a furrowed brow.

"Plenty of them. Bluffed to kill me twice. Finally, when she found out I was married——"

"How did she find out that? You were not fool enough to tell her, I hope?"

"She found out. I don't know how she found out, but she found out."

For some moments neither spoke.

"What's her final offer?" resumed Rose.

Lamont lifted his head with a worried look in his eyes.

"Twenty-five thousand and quits," he said slowly, tugging at the end of his gray mustache with a hand that trembled visibly.

"Ridiculous! Modest, to say the least. Plain blackmail, Jack. If you pay that woman a cent you'll never get rid of her."

"Call it what you like," he returned gloomily, "but I've got enough of it."

Rose half raised herself among the pillows, and for a long moment regarded him intently.

"Does your—does Mrs. Lamont know?" she ventured.

He threw up his head with a jerk.

"Yes; Nelly knows," he declared curtly.

"What did *she* say?"

"Nothing."

"How nothing?"

"She said it was my own affair," he retorted with some heat. "Not much consolation in that," he added, "is there?"

"Is that *all* she said?" she questioned him, clasping her knees, her chin buried in her hands.

"Not exactly all—I've still got the yacht; she suggested my getting some sea air."

"I don't see what you've got to worry about," she returned, after a pause, a vestige of a smile playing about the corners of her mouth. "Jack, you're a fool—forgive me, but you are. Here you are—pretty close to a nervous wreck—mooning over the threats of this cat of a woman, with a free course out of your difficulties wide open to you."

"All that's easier said than done," he returned gloomily.

"You mean the expense?"

"Of course I mean the expense. Do you know what it costs to put the *Seamaid* in commission? She's small, I'll admit, and she's been freshly overhauled—I even put two new staterooms in her last year when I was flush—but you know what yachting costs, Rose. It isn't so much the craft, or her crew, or even her coal bill—it's the life. There's no use of sailing—whanging around by your lonesome, without friends aboard. I tried that once."

"There is no need of your going alone," she returned softly, meeting his eyes.

She stretched out her bare arms to him.

"Come," she said quietly. "Come and sit here beside me. Ah, my poor old Jack! What a baby you are!

"There! That's better," she said, as he seated himself beside her on the divan.

He bent and kissed her, smoothing back her dark hair.

"Rose, I love you!" he exclaimed. "You're the best—how can I ever——"

She sealed his lips with her hand.

"Come, let's talk sensibly," she resumed, stretching back against the pillows. "You've got a lot to be thankful for as far as I can see—your wife, I mean. Almost any other woman would have sued you for divorce."

"I know," he confessed. "Nell's all right."

"Jack, will you do as I say?"

"I'll try," he returned. "That depends."

"Trying is not promising—and I want you to promise me."

"Well, what?"

"Promise me that you will not communicate with this woman, or give her a cent; that if you meet her, that if she follows you, you will not open your lips to her."

"She threatens to bring the matter to court. I got a letter from her yesterday, saying she had put the matter in her lawyer's hands," he explained nervously.

"Threats! Her *lawyer!* They've always got law-

yers, those women. Don't worry about threats, Jack. The more a woman threatens, the less she does. Nothing has happened yet, has there?"

He shook his head. "You don't know her, Rose; she's a devil incarnate. Sometimes I think she's really insane."

"She's a good actress, Jack; most women are who get control of a man's nerves. Suppose she does bring suit—you won't be here."

"I don't see how I can very well get away," he declared with a shrug.

"A question of money?"

"I'm afraid so, Rose."

"Jack, you've been gambling."

"A little."

"You never gamble for a little. Why *will* you gamble?"

"Why does any one gamble—or drink—or do anything in life?"

She did not reply.

Finally she said, after a pause:

"Don't worry about the money. I've got plenty of money."

"Rose!"

"I don't see why you should worry," she smiled, "as long as I've got it."

He started to speak, but she sealed his lips again, this time with the tips of her fingers. "What I'd like to know is, how you like Gladys Rice?"

"Who—little Mrs. Rice?"

"I heard you call her 'Gladys' the last time you met her here," she smiled.

"Perhaps I did."

"There's no perhaps about it. I heard you."

"Why—er—she's charming—pretty—and clever," he exclaimed, brightening.

"She's more than that," she declared. "Gladys is a trump. She's been a good friend to me. We became widows about the same time. Her husband died in California, you know."

"Yes, she told me."

"Then there's Billy Bowles—fat, jolly Billy Bowles—mighty good company, Jack."

"Well, what of it?"

"And Johnny Richards. Did you ever see Johnny in a bad humor? *I* never did."

"Rose, what are you driving at?"

"I was only thinking they'd make a splendid trio on the *Seamaid*. We could run first to Bermuda—then just to any old place we thought of. I'm sick of New York."

He looked at her, his whole face alight.

"Rose!" he cried. "You're the best—" He bent over her, his black eyes gleaming. "Rose, I want to— Ah! what's the use of trying to thank you."

"Don't thank me, Jack. Promise me what I've asked. Will you promise me? On your honor, Jack?"

"Yes—I promise you. I give you my word of honor, Rose, I'll do as you say." He lifted her hand to his lips in gratefulness.

"Feel better?" she asked, smiling into his eyes.

"Better? Why, I feel ten years younger."

"All right," she said. "I'll trust you, Jack. You keep your promise to me, and I'll keep mine. Don't worry about the money."

"But I do!" he cried, springing to his feet dramatically. "If I wasn't so deuced short, Rose, I wouldn't hear of it. One thing you've got to promise me—that you'll consider it as a loan," he insisted.

"I'm going to consider it as I please," she returned, reaching for a cigarette. "Your yacht—my money—that's fair, isn't it?"

"As you please," he said, with a helpless shrug. "As you please, madame," he returned with a smile, and bowed.

He was his old debonair self again. He felt like a man who had been given a new lease of life. Rose had lifted him out of his anxiety. The woman who had persecuted him seemed harmless to him now.

Again he took his seat beside her on the divan.

"You'll dine with me to-night," he ventured.

"That's nice of you, Jack. Yes, of course I will."

"There's a lot to talk over," he explained, "about getting the *Seamaid* ready."

"How long will it take," she asked, "to get her in commission?"

"Oh, about a week. How about little Mrs. Rice—I mean Gladys—Bowles and Richards—can you count on them to go?"

"They'll go," she declared. "Leave that to me."

"You'd better dress, dear," he said, snapping out his watch. "It's after seven. We'll go around to Solari's."

Her hand went back of the pillows. She touched an electric button to summon her maid.

Marie was still with her.

"*Bon soir, Marie,*" said Lamont to her pleasantly, as she appeared.

"*Bon soir, monsieur,*" returned the girl cheerily. "*Monsieur va bien!*"

"My black chiffon—high neck, Marie."

"*Bien, madame,*" and the maid left the room.

"One moment, Rose," he said, detaining her as she started to rise from the divan. "There is something that I can't quite understand."

"Come, Jack! I must get dressed," she protested.

"Forgive me," he persisted, "but I can't help wondering a little. Only last week you were worrying about your dressmaker's bill, and now you are financing a yacht—with guests."

She had risen to her feet, despite his detaining hand, and stood looking down into his eyes with an amused smile.

"You are indiscreet, *monsieur,*" said she, and rushed to her bedroom.

He waited for her to dress, striding impatiently up and down the polished studio floor, still wondering over her unexpected generosity and the real secret of her sudden wealth. Like most women left with an income, she had, as he knew, already made dan-

gerous inroads into her capital. There had been times, too, when her old love of extravagance had led her far beyond her means—even to the pawnbrokers.

Through the half-open door of her bedroom familiar sounds reached him—the faint tinkle of hairpins falling upon a silver tray, the swish and rustle of a gown as Marie helped her mistress into it, the click-click of a button-hook—all favorite music to Lamont's ears.

"Getting tired, Jack?" she called to him, rattling back into place the gilt cover of a crystal jar and slapping the powder from her hands. "What time is it?"

He glanced at his watch under the glow of the tall piano-lamp Marie had lighted.

"Ten minutes past eight."

"I'll be ready in a moment," she called back to him.

Presently she came to him, drawing on her long gloves, followed by Marie bearing a marvellous wrap of steel blue, lined with chinchilla.

"How do you like it?" she asked, half turning for him to admire her gown.

"Exquisite!" he declared, running his eyes over the black chiffon. "Where did *that* come from?"

"Paris," she said, as Marie helped her on with her wrap, and disappeared in the bedroom to pick up her things. "Where else do they make pretty gowns?"

"It's charming," he declared. He seized her gloved hands impulsively. "Rose! Forgive me, if I was indiscreet a moment ago. There's always a reason for good fortune—for sudden luck. Naturally, you old

darling, I could not help asking—after your generous offer. Natural, wasn't it? We've never had any secrets between us, Rose—besides, I think I have a right to know why you're flush—under the circumstances; that is, since we are to be shipmates."

"Ay, ay, captain!" she laughed, touching the brim of her becoming hat in salute.

"Rose, be serious—for once."

"And if I were to tell you, you wouldn't believe me."

"Have I ever doubted you?"

"Suppose I give you three guesses," she smiled teasingly, her lips close to his own. "Would that satisfy you, Mr. Inquisitive?"

"This is no guessing matter," he returned, half irritably, tucking her sleeves deep into her wrap, his fingers lingering in the warm chinchilla. "This from Paris, too?"

"Don't you adore making guesses?" she smiled mischievously, ignoring his question.

"You know I loathe guessing," he retorted. "I abhor conundrums. I have an absolute horror of riddles and all that sort of thing. Come! Why won't you be frank with me? Why are you in luck? Have *you* been gambling?"

"Perhaps," she returned gently, watching him closely, "but not at your game."

"What then— Wall Street?"

"I had enough of Wall Street with Sam. My dear Jack, has it occurred to you that I am famished? Come, let's go to dinner."

She drew him toward the door, and he followed her down the gaslit stairs in silence.

At the mention of her dead husband's name, a new thought came to his mind. Was some other man enriching her? And though she detected for an instant a gleam of jealousy in his eyes, he questioned her no further. He brightened up over the good dinner. After all, he told himself, he had enough to be grateful for without pinning her down to facts.

Nine days later the *Seamaid* cleared, bound for Bermuda. Never had the yacht been more luxuriously provisioned. True to her promise, Gladys Rice, Billy Bowles, and Johnny Richards were with them.

"Out of sight out of mind" is an old adage, that proved itself to Lamont before they were many hours at sea. The woman who had threatened him seemed only an annoying memory now. He lapsed into the lazy, genial life aboard as easily as a cat takes to the fireside. With Rose's money and his yacht, life seemed perfect. Not once did he question her as to its source.

There was something in fat Billy Bowles's inside pocket, however, which would have enlightened him —possibly have destroyed some of his peace of mind —the stubs in his check-book.

CHAPTER XX

Matilda had knocked at Enoch's door this crisp September morning and, getting no response, felt for his key under the mat, found it, and entered. To her surprise, not a chair or a book in the sitting-room was out of place. The fire she had built the day before was precisely as her black hands had left it.

"Fo' God!" she exclaimed, as she entered the small bedroom and saw the untouched counterpane and pillow. "He ain't been to bed."

Never had Enoch, upon the rare occasions when some public dinner had called him out of town for the night, gone without letting either she or Moses know. Indeed, he was most punctilious about this—invariably leaving with them his telegraphic address. For a brief instant, Matilda stood by the bed—her bosom heaving. Then she turned anxiously to the closet where he kept his clothes, got down on her knees, groped in its depths, and, seizing a valise which he always took with him, drew it out with a trembling hand.

"Ain't done—even took—his gripsack!" she faltered, her anxiety growing as she noted its emptiness.

Her fear told in her voice now as she summoned

Moses, who had just entered the Grimsby-Atwater living-room with a scuttle of coal.

"Monstus strange," declared Moses solemnly, as he stood with his wife before Enoch's untouched bed. "It suttinly am monstus strange, Tildy," he repeated, shaking his woolly head dubiously. "Dar's his grip-sack sho' 'nouf," he exclaimed, opening the closet door. "Yo' sho' he didn't say nuffin 'bout gwine away? Rack yo' brain, honey, an' stop yo' tremblin', won't do no good to go on dat-a-way."

"Last time I seen him," declared Matilda, "was yisterday when I was breshin' up de sittin'-room. He sot over dar yonder in de big chair a-readin' of his mail."

"An' he didn't say nuffin 'bout gwine away?" Moses insisted.

"Nuffin mo'en 'good mornin', Matildy.' Bimeby I done got through ma dustin', an' was a-gwine in to make his bed, when I seen him open one er de letters what come dat mornin'. He tar it open like it was a-hidin' some news from him. Den he done read it anxious like. Den he jump up from de big chair an' grab his hat an' overcoat, an' slap out de do', lickety-split. Didn't even close de do'. Den I run an' look out de winder, an' I seen him. He was a-walkin' fast —like he couldn't walk no faster—an' a shakin' of his head. I tell yo', nigger, somethin' was monstus heavy on his mine. I never seen Marser Crane like dat befo'."

"Which-a-way was he a-goin'?" asked Moses anxiously.

"I dunno which-a-way he was a-goin', but he done turned de corner leadin' to de Broadway."

When that night Enoch did not return, and no word had come from him, Moses and Matilda could no longer keep their fears secret. They informed the household. Joe seemed to be less alarmed and more philosophical than the rest. It was more probable, he assured them all, that Enoch had been hurriedly called away on important business, had even sent word of his intended absence, and the letter or telegram miscarried.

When the next night he did not return Joe, too, became alarmed. He called at three of Enoch's clubs, only to learn that Mr. Crane had not entered any of them for over a week. Neither had he been at his office in South Street.

Ebner Ford now assumed the rôle of optimist, which far from easing Joe's mind, exasperated him, for he declared in his blatant way that "Crane wa'n't no fool, and so all-fired mysterious and peculiar that there was no tellin' what he'd do next."

At an opportune moment he nudged Joe meaningly in the ribs, winking one eye screened from his wife knowingly, and whispering something about "lettin' him have his little fling"; further suggesting that "he wa'n't the first man overdue on account of the affections of a lady friend, or a run of luck at poker." Even following the silent but indignant Joe into the hall, and despite that young man's disgust, recounted

to him, with a sly and confidential grin, similar little absences of his own.

Late that afternoon, any one in passing the old house in Waverly Place might have seen Enoch going up the stoop. There was something about his whole personality, as he went wearily up the brownstone steps, to have arrested the attention of even a casual acquaintance. His shoulders were bent, and there was a grim look about his face—a strange pallor, the eyes sunken and haggard, like those of a man who had not slept.

He reached the vestibule, slipped his key in the door, opened it, and slowly ascended the dark stairs. No one so far was aware of his presence. It was only when he reached the third-floor landing that he encountered any one. Here he came face to face with Moses. For a brief moment the old servant's surprise and relief was so great he could not speak.

"Praise de Lord!" he broke out with, in a voice that quavered with joy. "You done come back, marser. Praise de Lord!"

"Yes, Moses," returned Enoch wearily. "I'm back."

"I'se been most crazy, Marser Crane. Matildy, too —an' de hull house a-watchin' an' a-waitin' fo' yer."

"Is Mr. Grimsby in?" inquired Enoch.

"Spec' he's out—Marser Crane—I sho' 'nouf ain't seen him."

"Tell Mr. Grimsby—when he comes in that—that —I should like to see him."

He spoke with an effort, as if each word was painful to him.

"Dat I suttinly will, marser," declared Moses and watched him in silence as he continued up the short flight of stairs leading to his door—awed by the change in him. Then he rushed down to tell Matilda.

Enoch entered his sitting-room, felt in the dusk for the matches, lighted the Argand burner on the centre-table, turned its flame low, struck another match, kindled his fire, drew a deep sigh, laid his overcoat and hat on the table, and sank into his chair.

For a long while he sat there immovable, staring vacantly into the slowly kindling fire. How long he was not conscious of. Now and then his lips moved, but he uttered no sound; a thin tongue of flame struggling up between the hickory logs played over his haggard face, rigid as a mask. His hands lay motionless on the broad arms of his chair. Thus an hour passed, an hour full of tragic memories. So absorbed was he that he did not hear Joe spring up-stairs and rap at his door.

Joe rapped again.

"It's Joe!" he called sharply.

Enoch slowly roused himself.

"Come in," he said hoarsely, clearing his throat.

"Good heavens," cried Joe, entering briskly, "where on earth have you been? The whole house has been worried about you."

Enoch did not speak.

Joe strode over to the motionless form in the chair and caught sight of the haggard face.

"Mr. Crane!" he exclaimed. "Why—you're ill—what has happened?"

"Sit down," returned Enoch slowly. "Joe, I have something to tell you. My wife died last night."

"Your *wife!*"

"Yes, my boy—my wife. Rather alters a man's life, Joe. I had been hoping for twenty years she would pull through—some of them do," he added, staring into the flames. "I saw some indications of it last Sunday," he went on before Joe could speak. "I spent the morning with her as usual—again last night—for a brief instant I saw what I believed to be some recognition—a faint hope. It was only a flash before the light went out." He raised his hands helplessly and let them fall.

Joe, who had not yet taken his seat, turned to the crackling fire, and stood for a long moment looking down at the flames.

"I did not know you were married," he said at length, breaking the ensuing silence—"that—your wife was an invalid."

"She was insane," replied Enoch evenly.

"Insane! Oh! Mr. Crane!"

Enoch lifted his head.

"She has been insane since the first year of our marriage," said he. "Sit down, won't you?" he pleaded, motioning to the chair in the shadow of the chimney-piece. "I have much to tell you. Come a little

nearer—there, that is better—my voice is not overstrong to-night. You are surprised, no doubt. I do not blame you, my boy. That is why I want you to understand. So few have ever understood me. None, I might say, in all these lonely years. A man cannot live under what I have suffered, and not be misunderstood. To be separated from the one who is nearest and dearest to you in life. Far worse than a stranger to her, since for years I have passed out of even her memory. The past has been a blank to her. She became another being. It was that flash of supposed recognition which gave me hope last Sunday. I felt she remembered me; knew me at last; that little by little her mind was clearing. The physicians thought so, too. We were mistaken."

He paused, leaning forward in the firelight, his hands clasped over his knees; Joe silent, waiting for him to continue. His heart went out to him, he tried to say something to comfort him, at least to express his deep and sincere sympathy. Before Enoch's tragic revelation, the words he struggled to frame seemed trivial and out of place.

"We were children together," resumed Enoch, in a voice that had grown steadier. "We grew up together in fact—in Philadelphia—my wife was barely eighteen when we were married, and I just your age. One year of happiness is not much in a man's life. It has been my lot—yet I am even grateful for that. Then came her serious illness, due to an operation that it was a miracle she lived through—only her will

and her nervous, high-strung nature saved her. The result was the beginning of acute melancholia. We travelled, we went abroad. I felt that constant moving from place to place would distract her mind. We spent two winters in Egypt, but she grew worse, even violent at times, and I was obliged to bring her home. Our home-coming marked the period of my exile. It meant that I could no longer keep her with me. The end came last night."

He paused again.

Joe did not speak. Somehow he felt that he, who, little by little, was revealing to him the secret history of his life, wished to continue uninterrupted.

"You, my boy," continued Enoch; "are beginning your life; mine is ended. I shall move away from here. Travel, perhaps; I must decide something, though it matters so little where I go. There is a limit to all suffering. I had hope before. To-night even that is gone. I tell you all this, for I want you to know."

He passed his hand wearily over his brow.

"I must eat something, I suppose," said he. "I have not eaten anything since yesterday afternoon."

"You must have something at once," declared Joe, rising. "I'll ring for Moses."

"No, not yet," protested Enoch; "but I'll have a glass of port, I believe. Would you mind getting it? It's over there in the bookcase. There are some crackers, too, on the lower shelf; next to the glasses."

Joe brought him a full glass of port and he drained

it, ate a cracker, and resumed, strengthened by the wine.

"You have grown very near to me, Joe; more than you realize, perhaps. The glorious beginning of yours and Sue's happiness is a comfort to me, even in these sad hours. Your success, your love for one another, mean much to me."

"I'm glad of that," returned Joe. "Sue will feel dreadfully when she hears you are going away. And I—well, you know how I feel about it. Somehow I can't imagine our wedding without you. Must you go?"

"When are you to be married?" he asked, looking up.

"Well, you see, it is not exactly decided yet. Sue has set her heart on before Christmas."

"That's right, my boy, have as many Christmases as you can together," he returned thoughtfully.

"Although the job's done," declared Joe, "as far as my part is concerned—specifications all in—and the last of the full-sized details went to the contractors two weeks ago—but our first payment, you see, on the new building is not due us until February. I do not see how we can very well manage to get married before."

"Who is to make this payment to you?" asked Enoch.

"The committee, we are told."

"It has always been the duty of its chairman to attend to such matters," Enoch remarked, not letting

him know it was he who had acted in that capacity; then, before Joe could question him, he added seriously: "Promise me something. I do not wish you to mention my wife's death to Sue. It would do no good—only worry her uselessly. I have carried it alone and will continue to. I tell you of her death, because its effect on my movements in life might be misunderstood by you. People, I say, have always misunderstood me. I know what they think of me. Their opinions have time and time again reached my ears. I have heard them call me crabbed, crusty—a sour and malignant old man," he went on, "even mean. Ah, yes! A sour and malignant old man, always in a temper—an old curmudgeon."

Joe started to protest, but Enoch continued:

"A hermit, who prefers his own companionship to that of friends—but if you knew how little the opinions of others affect me. I have long ago ceased to care for other people's opinions. I have learned something in my life, lonely as it has been—and that is tolerance. Be tolerant, Joe; tolerant of every one—of even the ignorance, the vindictiveness of others. Perhaps even *you* think I am hard-hearted"—and before Joe could interrupt him: "You see me dry-eyed, and yet you have no idea what her death means to me. She did not suffer, even when the end came. I am grateful for that."

He paused again, seeming to lapse into a revery, his chin sunk deep between his hands.

"Could nothing be done?" ventured Joe.

Enoch slowly shook his head.

"Only a miracle would have accomplished that," said he.

"Might I ask where Mrs. Crane died?"

"At Ravenswood, at my old friend Doctor Brixton's sanatorium, where she had been for nearly five years."

"And you say you thought she recognized you?"

"Yes—for that brief instant I did; so did Brixton and the nurse—a certain look in her eyes, an old, familiar gesture of the hands; it was only a flash before the light went out," he repeated. "She was dying then; I tried to force her to speak my name, but it was useless, Joe. She was conscious but very weak. I tried to force her to continue her train of thought, in what I believed was a brief awakening. She looked at me blankly as I held her hands, and murmured faintly: 'Why have you come again, doctor?' Presently she added, almost inaudibly, 'You have not thanked me for the roses'—and then, after a moment, 'I have hidden them again—I shall hide them always'—she ceased speaking. Before I could summon Brixton she was dead."

Enoch got up stiffly out of his chair and stood gazing down at the smouldering ashes of the fire.

"Gone," he said slowly. "Gone like all precious things in life."

He turned wearily to the table, raised the flame of the Argand burner to a soft glow, and proceeded with a determined, slow step to his desk. Here for a mo-

ment he hesitated. Then he felt for the small key on his watch-chain, and unlocked the tiny drawer containing the daguerreotype of the young girl with the dark, wistful eyes. For a moment he held it in his hand.

"My wife at eighteen," he said, returning to the table and holding the portrait under the light.

Joe bent over it reverently, studying the delicate features, the drooping, melancholy mouth, the wondering, dark eyes.

"What a beautiful face!" he said.

"Yes, poor child, she was beautiful—*then*," returned Enoch.

"What wonderful eyes!" said Joe.

"Yes," said Enoch. "They reflected her whole nature; her sensitiveness, her melancholy, high-strung intensity. Too delicate a mechanism to last; a nature capable of great suffering—gentle natures always are. One who loved with her whole heart—her whole being—her very soul. When the change came, all this complex and delicate fabric withered—was consumed to ashes like lace in a flame. She became another being; when the mind is gone there is nothing left. I wanted you to see her as she was," said he, returning the portrait to the drawer and locking it. Then seating himself on the arm of his chair, he continued, in a calm voice full of courage: "I must return to Ravenswood to-night. The funeral is on Monday. Explain my absence to Moses—to the rest, if you like, simply say that I am out of town, and if——"

The sound of some one rushing up to the top floor silenced him.

"Mr. Crane! Mr. Crane!" cried a woman frantically, beating her hands upon the door. Enoch sprang to his feet, as Joe rushed to open it.

In her wrapper, her gray hair dishevelled, Miss Ann burst into the room.

"Oh, Mr. Crane!" she gasped, staggering toward him, her frail hands clutching at her temples. "Oh, my God! Jane is dying!"

CHAPTER XXI

The *Britannic,* bound for Liverpool, rose, fell, and plunged on stubbornly, in a wintry head sea.

Enoch lay in his berth, reading. Every little while her bow buried itself under a great wave. Some burst upon her fore-deck, with the boom and vibration of big guns, her bow obliterated under the explosion in a blinding mass of spray.

Heavy-booted sailors clambered back and forth over the ceiling of the plain little stateroom, busily lashing some canvas as a windbreak on the starboard-deck. Below, the woodwork creaked in unison to the lift and roll of the ship. People who had no longer any interest in life rang for the stewards or stewardesses, and groaned while they waited.

None of these sounds, however, disturbed Enoch. He was not only thoroughly comfortable, but supremely happy. It showed in every line of his face, in the quiet twinkle in his eyes. He read on. Now and then his smile widened into a broad grin over a page—pages he knew by heart, and had never yet grown tired of.

"What a wonderful fellow Carroll is," he declared. "What a subtle artisan in humor!

"'They were learning to draw,' the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting

very sleepy, 'and they drew all manner of things—everything that begins with "M"——'

"'Why with an "M"?' said Alice," as Enoch turned the page.

"'Why not?' said the March Hare.

"Delicious!" exclaimed Enoch aloud.

Two thousand miles back over that vast desert of wintry sea, the old house in Waverly Place stood stark and empty. Robbed even of its sign, "For Sale"—having been sold, and only waiting now for the crowbars of a wrecking crew to complete its final ruin and give place to a new building.

A general exodus of its tenants and their belongings from cellar to roof had occurred immediately after Joe and Sue's quiet wedding. Fortune and Mercury still smiled at the passer-by, but over a filthy vestibule, dust begrimed, a refuge for stray cats and dentists' circulars.

Close to the locked area-gate stood a battered ash-can, from which emerged a pair of cast-off shoes, and the skeleton of a broken umbrella; the whole place seemed dead and forgotten.

Even Moses and Matilda's black cat now dozed contentedly before a new kitchen fire in Brooklyn, in a snug frame house Enoch had bestowed upon these faithful servitors, including an income sufficient for their declining years.

Since her sister Jane's death, Miss Ann had been living in Virginia, in a fine old estate close to Richmond, an inheritance from a cousin. An old school

friend, a Miss Patricia Belford, lived with her now—a maiden lady of rare humor, a gentle voice, and continuous cheerfulness. And here it would not be amiss to state that Emma Ford had persuaded Ebner at last to relinquish his strenuous business career in New York and return to her plain native town in North Carolina, where he became a really successful dealer in simple real estate and a popular superintendent of the Sunday-school and local Lyceum. The firm of Atwater & Grimsby had moved up-town, away from the redolent lemons and bananas, and was now newly installed in Twenty-third Street, just opposite the National Academy of Design, Atwater selecting his bachelor quarters as far up as Forty-third Street. As for the *Seamaid*, she was still cruising, her arrival in Havana being cited only the week before as follows:

Havana—Cuba—Dec. 18th arrived the auxiliary schooner *Seamaid* with her owner Mr. J. Lamont and guests—all well.

Enoch read on through Alice's fascinating, playful wonderland, cradled by the lift and roll of the good ship.

Now and then a big sea caught her under its dead weight amidships, sent her staggering up under tons of water, and the swash scurrying down her scuppers.

The raw, wintry afternoon began to wane. Presently a sailor, whose duty it was to attend to the stateroom lights, lit Enoch's from the corridor, a fat sort of coach-candle, back of a round glass, close to

his berth, its glow screened by a green baize curtain, with a roller-shade attachment.

Enoch pulled up the curtain and continued in company with the Dormouse, Alice, and the March Hare, the Hatter joining them on the next page. So absorbed was he that he almost forgot it was Christmas Eve, or that he had missed his usual afternoon cup of tea and chat with his old friend, the captain. Finally he laid aside his book, stretched himself, flung himself out of his berth briskly, went to his port-hole and peered out at the mountainous leaden sea.

"A head sea," he said aloud, as the crest of a wave smashed against the port-hole. "The skipper was right; he expected it."

The perfume of a sizzling hot plum pudding from the pantry wafted down the corridor and over the ventilating space of his stateroom.

"So it's Christmas Eve," he said, turning from the dreary outlook to his wash-basin.

He put on a clean shirt, carefully combed his sparse hair, washed his face and hands vigorously, and rang for the steward.

"A rough night, Tim," said Enoch, as the man appeared with a steaming tin pitcher.

"'Tis cruel bad, sor," declared the Irishman. "'Twill be worse before mornin'. If it was the hot water, sor, you be after ringin' for, sure here it is, sor," said he, setting down the pitcher safely in the wash-basin. "I biled it meself. They be busy in the pantry to-night —seein' it's Christmas Eve."

"Thank you, Tim, for the hot water," smiled Enoch, "but I've washed. Are you married, Tim?"

"Yis, sor; to as fine a little woman as iver came from the County Kerry."

"Any children?"

"Three, sor—two byes and a gurl."

"I want you to wish them a merry Christmas when you reach port," said Enoch. He dove into his pocket, separated two gold sovereigns from some keys and silver, and forced them into the astonished steward's hand.

The man's eyes slowly filled with tears.

"God bless ye, sor," he said, and paused. "'Tis thim that'll bless ye, too. May I be so bold as to ask if ye have any childer, sor? If ye have, sor, 'tis Christmas Eve, an' I wish thim a merry wan."

"Two," said Enoch. "Both married."

"They'll be missin' ye to-night, sor," said Tim. "'Tis a long ways to land."

The first gong for dinner reverberated down the corridor. As the steward withdrew and closed the stateroom door, Sue came laughing down the corridor, followed by Joe.

"Uncle Enoch, may we come in?" she asked, knocking at his door.

"Come in, my children," cried Enoch heartily, flinging his door wide open to them both.

"Oh, it's glorious on deck," cried Sue, pushing back the soaked hood of her ulster, her fair hair glistening from the salt spray.

"Great!" cried Joe, filling the doorway. "Ripping old weather—splendid old sea—smashing right over her," he declared. "We've been watching it for hours. Hello! there's the second gong. I'm as hungry as a bear."

"Do you realize it's Christmas Eve?" said Enoch, meeting Sue's eyes. "Your first Christmas Eve together?"

She looked up at him radiantly, then she flung her arms about his neck, pressing her fresh, girlish cheek to his, and kissed him.

"A merry Christmas, dear," she whispered. "I'm going to wish you a merry Christmas now; I just can't wait till morning."

Then the three struggled down the long corridor to dinner.

"I've been thinking things over since luncheon," said Enoch, as they entered the dining-saloon. "What do you say to our taking in Venice on our way back, and going straight to Cairo? Venice is as cold as Christmas in January," he added gayly, as he turned Sue's chair for her and slipped into his own beside her, next to the captain.

THE END

BOOKS BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

FELIX O'DAY

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"This is an American classic in fiction—persuasive in interest; intense in its humanity; brilliant and sympathetic in present-day characterization. It belongs of right to the scanty array of permanent contributions to American literature."—*Philadelphia North American.*

ENOCH CRANE

A NOVEL PLANNED AND BEGUN BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH AND COMPLETED BY F. BERKELEY SMITH

Illustrated by ALONZO KIMBALL. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

The story is of New York; specifically, the scene is Waverly Place, in one of the characteristic old houses of that section. In this respect it has much of the flavor of "Peter"—its characters as lovable, its scenes as colorful.

THE FORTUNES OF OLIVER HORN

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"It is in the character-drawing that the author has done his best work. No three finer examples of women can be found than Margaret Grant, Sallie Horn, Oliver's mother, and Lavinia Clendenning, the charming old spinster."—*Louisville Courier-Journal.*

PETER

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"It is an old-fashioned love story."—*The Outlook.*

"Old Peter Grayson is a charming character, with his old-fashioned virtues, his warm sympathies, and his readiness to lend a hand."—*Springfield Republican.*

BOOKS BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

THE ROMANCE OF AN OLD-FASHIONED GENTLEMAN

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"A breath of pure and invigorating fragrance out of the fogs and tempests of the day's fiction."
—*Chicago Tribune.*

COLONEL CARTER'S CHRISTMAS

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"The dear old colonel claims our smiles and our love as simply and as whole-heartedly as ever."—*Life.*

THE ARM-CHAIR AT THE INN

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.30 *net*

"It would be hard to find a more entertaining, piquant, and sweet-spirited companion in book form."
—*Chicago Herald.*

KENNEDY SQUARE

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.30 *net*

"All that was best in the banished life of the old South has been touched into life and love, into humor and pathos, in this fine and memorable American novel."
—*Chicago Herald.*

THE TIDES OF BARNEGAT

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"The story is one of strong dramatic power. Its style is direct and incisive, revealing a series of strongly drawn pictures."—*Philadelphia Record.*

BOOKS BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

THE WOOD FIRE IN NO. 3

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"None of Mr. Smith's writings have shown more delightfully his spirit of genial kindliness and sympathetic humor."—*Boston Herald.*

FORTY MINUTES LATE and Other Stories

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"It overflows with friendliness and enjoyment of life, and it furnishes a capital example of impressionistic writing."—*The Outlook.*

THE VEILED LADY

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"These little stories are as entertaining as any he has written, and we can recommend them confidently to his many admirers."—*New York Sun.*

"They are exceedingly agreeable stories with an atmospheric quality which the versatile author imparts to them."—*Philadelphia Press.*

AT CLOSE RANGE

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"These simple tales contain more of the real art of character-drawing than a score of novels of the day."
—*New York Evening Post.*

"He has set down with humorous compassion and wit the real life that we live every day."
—*The Independent.*

THE UNDER DOG

Illustrated. 12*mo* $1.35 *net*

"Mr. Hopkinson Smith's genius for sympathy finds full expression in his stories of human under dogs of one sort and another . . . each serves as a centre for an episode, rapid, vivid, story-telling."—*The Nation.*

BOOKS BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

"The Thackeray of American fiction."
—*Boston Herald.*

THE NOVELS, STORIES, AND SKETCHES OF F. HOPKINSON SMITH

Beacon Edition. **In Twenty-three Volumes**

"He has always had unquestioning faith in the significance and interest of the simple, universal human experiences as they come to normal, brave, affectionate, gentle-mannered, or robust, untrained men and women.

"As he looks at nature so he looks at man: with clear vision; with sympathy rather than curiosity; with an eye for the fine things in the rugged man and the vigorous, sinewy, self-sustaining woman; and for the natural virtues, the deep tenderness, the true-heartedness in the man of long descent and the woman of gentle breeding.

"His style is singularly concise, exact, compact; possessed of a vitality which uses various arts of expression; his style is notable for concentration, solidity, reality."—HAMILTON W. MABIE.

FOR PARTICULARS
concerning the Beacon Edition of the works of F. Hopkinson Smith, sold only by subscription, send for circular

---

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
597-599 FIFTH AVENUE - - NEW YORK